

Kurdish leader backs federation in Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — Iraqi Kurdish opposition leader Massoud Barzani has said the creation of a federation in Iraq was the "most practical" way to repair ties with Baghdad, in an interview published here Saturday. "Kurds are for the unity of Iraq and we feel that a federation would be the most practical and realistic formula for relations between Kurdistan and the central government," the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader said. "The United States, France, Britain and Syria all support the rights of the Kurdish people but in the framework of a unified Iraq," Mr. Barzani said. The interview with the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram was carried out in Damascus, where the KDP leader met last week with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad. The KDP and a rival group, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have controlled northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad since 1991. PUK leader Jalal Talabani rules out any renewal of dialogue with President Saddam Hussein.

Jordan Times

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Qatar: No peace without Jerusalem

RAMALLAH (AP) — One day before Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were to begin negotiations over the future of Jerusalem, a Qatari minister said Saturday that there would be no peace unless Jerusalem was the capital of a Palestinian state. Qatari Justice Minister Najib Naimi said there could be "no real final settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis without... Jerusalem as the main capital of a Palestinian state." Mr. Naimi spoke at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah where he signed a deal on behalf of the Gulf state pledging funds to pay for an international law centre and new library for the West Bank University. Mr. Naimi's comments on Jerusalem were greeted by applause from the 150 faculty members present at the signing ceremony. Mr. Naimi met Friday with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Gaza and held meetings with other Palestinian officials in Jerusalem since his arrival Thursday. Mr. Naimi had no plans to meet with Israeli officials during the visit.

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Amman-Tel Aviv bus shuttle delayed

AMMAN (AP) — A bus shuttle between Amman and Tel Aviv has been postponed by "at least two weeks" to allow more time for technical preparations, Transport Minister Nasser Lawzi said Saturday. The bus service will not be launched May 5 as previously announced due to "logistical and procedural matters," he said. Mr. Lawzi explained that the transport companies that will operate the Amman-Tel Aviv shuttle were not ready. He stressed that the delay has "no political bearings."

Sudan to counteract U.N. sanctions

DUBAI (R) — Sudanese President General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir on Saturday condemned terrorism but said his country would respond with political measures to United Nations sanctions imposed on it. "Reciprocity is a known diplomatic principle and we will resort to it with regards to the Security Council resolution," he told a news conference in Saudi Arabia, a few days after performing the Muslim Hajj pilgrimage. "The resolution is a political one and Sudan condemns all forms of terrorism and it will deal with the resolution from a political standpoint," he said.

FBI warns of threats to Jewish Americans

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has warned Jewish organisations of a threat to kill 1,200 Jewish physicians and executives in the United States. The threat set a deadline of May 5 for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and a payment of \$12 billion in compensation for Lebanese killed in Middle East fighting. The threat came from "an anonymous person(s)," said the FBI in a statement. "There is no way to know at this time if the threat is real, but the FBI believes that Jewish organisations, synagogues and individuals should for their own safety be on heightened alert," the statement said. The deadline for the withdrawal was Sunday, May 5.

Ex-minister killed in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Former Algerian Interior Minister Mohammed Hardi was assassinated by a suspected hit squad Saturday at Oued Smar, southwest of Algiers, the security services announced. Hardi was killed by "three armed criminals" around 3:30 p.m. in the car park of a state-owned firm, the security forces said, using a term normally employed to describe anti-government gunmen. No further details of the killing were given. He is the second former interior minister to be killed, after Babou Kahkr Belakid was killed last year in downtown Algiers.

China reiterates support for Mideast deal

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen reiterated here Saturday that China would continue to support the peace process in the Middle East, the Xinhua news agency reported. Mr. Qian made the remark in a meeting with an Israeli judicial delegation headed by Israeli Minister of Justice David Libai, the official news agency said. Mr. Qian said China hoped the upcoming negotiations between Israel and Palestinians would "achieve positive results," it said. Mr. Libai briefed Mr. Qian on Israel's position in the talks, Xinhua said, and thanked Beijing for its support. The Israeli minister also reiterated that his government respected China's "one China" policy, and opposed admitting Taiwan to the United Nations.

PLO and Israel launch final status talks today

Taba meeting expected to set venue and agenda and adjourn until after May 29 Israeli elections

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — The Palestinian cabinet devoted its weekly meeting here Saturday to preparations for the final status negotiations with Israel due to start in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba on Sunday.

Mahmoud Abbas, an architect of the Oslo peace accords who is to head the Palestinian delegation at Taba, said the first session of talks would last three hours and take place behind closed doors.

"On Sunday we will finalise the agenda for the negotiations with the Israelis," Mr. Abbas told journalists after the meeting.

Local Government Minister Saeb Erakat said the issues due to be settled in this round of talks "will allow the transition to a new period in our history."

The talks are expected to open formally Sunday in the Hilton Hotel in Taba before being adjourned until after Israel's general election on May 29.

The negotiations will deal with the thorniest issues still remaining including the fate of East Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, and Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Abbas said Sunday's talks would determine the venue and nature of the final status negotiations.

Uri Savir, Israel's foreign ministry director-general will head the Israeli delegation. "The committees could meet in different places. The talks will be held in secret and we will not negotiate through the press," Mr. Abbas said.

"If talks are conducted in-

tensively, we hope to finish in two years or less, but because we are dealing with tough issues talks might go on for three years," he added.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would like the negotiations to be held in Egypt.

Palestinians want the talks to lead to an independent state. Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres' ruling Labour Party dropped its rejection to a Palestinian state, but still favours some sort of confederation between a Palestinian entity and Jordan.

Palestinians want the negotiations to clear the way for a Palestinian state to be founded when the transitional period of autonomy expires in May 1999.

"Finally we will get to the heart of the matter," said Dr. Erakat.

Planning Minister Nabil Shaath said Sunday's talks in Taba would be largely "symbolic," adding "we will not resolve everything on Sunday."

"This first session will be an opportunity for both Palestinians and Israelis to show that they are sticking to their commitments," he said.

Palestinians and Israelis meanwhile protested at an army checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank against the protracted closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

More than 100 demonstrators, mostly labour activists, called for Israel to permit tens of thousands of Palestinian workers to return to their jobs in the Jewish state.

Waving red flags, demon-

strators chanted anti-closure slogans and carried banners which read: "Workers of the world, unite."

The closure was imposed after the first of four suicide bombings which killed 59 people in Israel between Feb. 25 and March 4. Israel has said it would not lift the closure until after its general elections on May 29.

"We have 15,000 people from the West Bank and Gaza Strip who can't get to their jobs in Arab institutions in Jerusalem alone," said Shaber Saad, head of the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank.

Benjamin Gonen, a member of Israel's labour federation, said: "We Israelis are here in solidarity with Palestinian labourers. The Israeli government should know that closure leads to starvation, starvation to hopelessness and hopelessness to catastrophe."

Asked why she had joined the protest, an elderly Palestinian woman dressed in traditional dress replied: "Why shouldn't I? I live near the checkpoint and see the people turned back every day."

Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak said Saturday there was no need to rush the army's redeployment from the flashpoint town of Hebron in the West Bank.

"I see no reason for us to hurry... I do not know when we will redeploy or indeed if it will go ahead" if the Labour Party is defeated by the right-wing opposition in the election, Mr. Barak told army radio.

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Syria assails U.S., wants Israel tried for Cana massacre

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — The official Syrian press on Saturday questioned the U.S. role in the Middle East peace process and called for Israeli leaders to be put on trial for the Cana massacre in South Lebanon.

"After the U.N. inquiry which blamed Israel for the massacre at Cana, the U.N. must consider Israeli leaders as war criminals and put them on trial in the same way as it did for Bosnia," said the government newspaper Tishrin.

"Israel waged a war of extermination against the Lebanese people and devastated the economic infrastructure of Lebanon, surpassing even Nazi crimes during World War II," the paper charged.

Informed sources at the United Nations said Friday that U.N. envoy General Frank Van Zeppen, charged with investigating the Cana massacre of April 18, reached a preliminary conclusion that Israeli artillery deliberately targeted the U.N. compound where 102 refugees were killed.

Tishrin complained that the United States, which is the chief sponsor of the Middle East peace process, "has not even condemned the Israeli crime in southern Lebanon."

How can Washington "at the same time be an honest broker in the peace process and a liar which seeks to please Israel, a state which practises terrorism," it asked, rejecting Syria's inclusion on a U.S. list of countries which allegedly sponsor terrorist groups.

The strong words from Tishrin came a day after U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher voiced "doubts" about the capacity of Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad to advance the peace process

because of the strength of "his suspicion and fear" of Israel.

In Damascus, President Al-Assad and his Lebanese counterpart Elias Hrawi met on Saturday to discuss developments in Lebanon after last month's deal that ended 17 days of fighting between Israel and Hizbollah.

President spokesman Jouban Kourieh said Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Sharaa were also at the meeting at the presidential palace in the coastal city of Latakia.

Mr. Hrawi's visit to Syria, which has some 35,000 troops in Lebanon and is the main foreign power broker there, is his first since the ceasefire on April 27 between Israel and Hizbollah.

Israel on Saturday rejected the U.N. finding that it had deliberately targeted the camp at Cana in Lebanon. "We were not aiming at the camp," Uri Dromi, Israel's government spokesman, said of the April 18 attack.

"We knew we were firing near a U.N. base but we were aiming a couple of hundred metres away, precisely where kayushas and mortars were fired from just minutes before," Mr. Dromi said.

"Unfortunately two of the shells overshoot and hit the civilians," Israel has maintained that it was unaware refugees had taken shelter at the camp.

A U.S. rights group on a fact-finding mission to South Lebanon said on Friday that Israel's 17-day bombardment caused terrible suffering and was a "crime."

Activists from Madra, a New York-based women's group that delivers aid to

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Agnelli launches EU push

CAIRO (Agencies) — Italy's Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli, whose country holds the presidency of the European Union (EU), arrived here Saturday at the start of a tour aimed at relaunching the Middle East peace process.

Ms. Agnelli, who will also travel to Beirut and Damascus, was to hold talks here with her Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa later Saturday, an Egyptian official said.

After a ceasefire reached in Israel's 16-day war on Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon went into effect on April 27, the EU stressed the importance of giving fresh impetus to the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Announcing the trip late last month Ms. Agnelli said it was vital to consolidate the peace process in the region. The peace process had been thrown into turmoil by the massive Israeli air, sea and land operation in southern Lebanon.

Ms. Agnelli said last week that "the ceasefire must be consolidated on a firm basis, resuming negotiations with Israel on the basis on U.N. resolutions, in order to promote a just, lasting and overall peace in the region."

The Italian minister said Israel "must respond positively" to the Palestinian National Council's vote to scrap the parts of its charter calling for Israel's destruction, by "applying all the agreed accords, including withdrawal from Hebron."

Lebanon requested a speedy return by Ms. Agnelli to the region following a trip there two weeks ago, although Italian officials stressed the EU mission aimed to complement U.S. efforts in the region.

The Washington Post re-

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ANTI-NUCLEAR PROTEST: Anti-nuclear demonstrators build a barricade on the railway tracks to a nuclear waste disposal in Gorleben, Germany, on Saturday. Riots start after a peaceful demonstration of more than 10,000 people against a transport of nuclear waste from France to Gorleben which is expected to arrive on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Qaqish to return to Baghdad soon

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian ambassador to Iraq, Bassam Qaqish, will return to Baghdad soon after a holiday following consultations with the government on concerns over the safety of Jordanians living in Iraq, Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Saturday.

Dr. Muasher, speaking to the press after a regular cabinet session, also said that recent clashes in the southern town of Tafilah stemmed from a dispute between tribes and were contained by the government.

According to informed sources, the clashes pitted two tribes from the area after one man from one of the tribes was killed in a dispute and his tribe wanted to avenge the death. The sources, whose account was not independently confirmed, said another man from the tribe of the victim of the first incident was also killed.

The information minister said Saturday's Cabinet session focused mainly on a draft law to establish a centre for freedom, democracy and human rights in line with directives from His Majesty King Hussein.

Replying to questions, Dr. Muasher said Ambassador Qaqish, who was recalled from Baghdad two weeks ago following the killing of at least six Jordanians there,

was now taking a holiday and would return to the Iraqi capital soon.

The minister said the Iraqi ambassador to Jordan, Nouri Al-Wayes, was also expected to return to Amman soon. Mr. Wayes had left Jordan for home shortly after Mr. Qaqish was recalled for consultations.

The recall came following the death of six Jordanians, two of them students, in Iraq in April. Three of the six were killed in what was described by the Iraqi media as a highway robbery. Details of the other killings are sketchy, with officials saying investigations were continuing into the incidents.

Dr. Muasher said there was no new development in applications by Iraqi exile groups to set up offices in Amman and noted that the government had already given permission to the Iraqi National Accord movement to open an office here.

The question on Iraqi exile groups was raised amid reports of representatives of Kurdish rebel factions visiting Jordan for talks with officials on opening offices here and coordination with the Iraqi National Accord.

A team from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) visited Jordan two weeks ago, and Iraqi sources said a delegation from the rival Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was expected here soon.

53 killed in Sudan air crash in storm

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — A Sudanese airliner on a domestic flight has crashed in a severe dust storm, killing all 53 people on board, the official Sudanese News Agency (SUNA) reported on Saturday.

It said the federal airlines Antonov 24 plane crashed while making an emergency landing on Friday night at Shigla area in Haj Yousif district, about 325 kilometres northeast of Khartoum. All 45 passengers and five crew were killed.

SUNA quoted eyewitnesses as saying the plane, en route from Wau in southern Sudan to Khartoum, was flying low over Shigla when it crashed into an empty house due to poor visibility.

Airport officials at Wau said the plane had university students and army officers on board.

Government officials in-

cluding the interior minister rushed to the scene.

In February, ninety-one people aboard a Sudanese military transport plane were killed when it crashed 40 kilometres south of Khartoum.

Egypt's Middle East News Agency quoted Information Minister Al-Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammad Kheir as saying the pilot was trying to make an emergency landing when the Antonov 24 crashed on Saturday.

He said the 58 passengers and the crew of five all were killed in the crash. He blamed the accident on poor visibility because of the sandstorm, the agency said.

The plane belonged to the private Federal Air Company.

The pilot apparently was trying to land in an open area

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Yemen agrees to accept arbitration panel ruling

SANAA, Yemen (AP)

President Ali Abdullah Saleh said Saturday Yemen will abide by the ruling of a proposed arbitration panel on a dispute with Eritrea over three Red Sea islands.

"We must all go to the panel armed with evidence... and at the end we must be convinced by, and accept, the panel's decision," he told a rally in the port city of Hodeida, 200 kilometres west of the capital, Sanaa.

His remarks were his first public comment on a Paris announcement earlier this week that Yemen and Eritrea have agreed to French proposals to settle the dispute through arbitration.

Press reports have referred to a three-judge panel with Yemen and Eritrea appointing one member each, with France naming the third.

The panel, the reports say, will determine the geographical area in contention before it considers the dispute itself. The panel's final decision will be binding.

Eritrea captured the island of Greater Hanish from Yemeni forces in a brief battle in mid-December. The other two islands — Lesser Hanish and Zuraq — remain under Yemeni control.

Eritrea had wanted any arbitration to rule on the own-

ership of the three islands and not just Greater Hanish, while Yemen insists that only that island was in dispute.

It is not clear whether a compromise has been reached in recent talks between French envoy Francis Guitman, Mr. Saleh and Eritrean President Issaias Aferwerki.

The December fighting and the war of words between the two countries which later ensued have heightened tension in the area and posed a potential threat to Red Sea shipping.

The three islands are some 160 kilometres north of the Bab El Mandeb, the Red Sea's southern entrance. They stand astride major shipping lanes.

French foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said in Paris Thursday that an accord on the arbitration plan would soon be signed in Paris. This is expected to take place this month with France, Egypt and Ethiopia countersigning.

Egypt and Ethiopia had launched separate mediation bids in the conflict without success. The two, together with the United Nations and the United States, later gave the French effort their blessing.

Iraq-U.N. oil-for-food talks resume this week

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — A fourth round of oil-for-food negotiations between Iraq and the United Nations will take place here next week, although no exact date has yet been fixed, U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa has announced.

Ms. Foa said that both sides were still discussing the day that the oil-for-food talks would resume. Iraqi sources said that the Iraqi delegation, led by Abdul Amir Al-Anbari, would arrive in New York on Sunday.

The negotiations were suspended on April 24 amid Iraqi accusations that the United States and Britain were attempting to torpedo the talks, which if successful could lead to sanctions-hit Iraq resuming oil exports to obtain food and medicine.

Washington and London said they had sought amendments to the draft agreement, focusing on implementation of U.N. Resolution 986, in order to ensure that Iraq strictly adhered to the terms of the resolution.

Resolution 986 provides for Iraq to export six billion worth of oil for a renewable six-month period, to raise money for food and medical supplies.

But it stipulates that part of the money from the oil sales must be used for aid to Kurds in northern Iraq which is no longer under government control.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, who is known to favour an agreement to help alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people, said following the suspension that he remained confident an agreement would be reached.

Until now, Iraq has refused to implement the resolution on the ground that it infringed on its sovereignty.

Iraq has been under international economic sanctions since invading Kuwait in 1990.

If the oil-for-food talks reach a successful conclusion it would signify the first exemption to the sanctions regime which can only be lifted when Iraq complies with stringent U.N. demands on dismantling its weapons of mass destruction.

Lebanon calls for talks with Israel

WASHINGTON (USIA) — The solution to the volatile situation in southern Lebanon can only be achieved through negotiations and an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory, Lebanon's ambassador to the United States, Riad Tahharah, said at the National Press Club on Friday.

"We're willing to enter peace talks," he said. "Let's sit down and talk."

He was very vague on what role Syria might play in such negotiations, however, noting only that "we have the same goals" as the Syrians and that Damascus had assured Lebanese authorities that their forces would not stay in the country once the Israelis had left the south.

"We will ask them and they will go," he stated.

Mr. Tahharah insisted that Lebanese authorities could ensure calm along their border with Israel and that they had been assured by Hizbollah that no attacks on Israel would take place once Israeli forces had withdrawn from their "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

"We are capable of establishing calm on our side of the border," Mr. Tahharah stated. "We can control Hizbollah... Once there is no occupation, there is no resistance," he continued. "The Lebanese army is now 'strong enough to maintain peace in the country' and the government has offered to 'send a large part' of the army to the south to enforce the peace once Israeli withdraws. With the help of outside forces, such as the troops France has suggested it might send, the guarantee should be even stronger," he added.

Mr. Tahharah supported Hizbollah's right to resist Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. As long as it is real resistance, the government will not oppose it, he stated.

As for the United States, Mr. Tahharah said that the recent events had "shaken" American credibility in the region. "There has to be more even-handedness," he also called upon the U.S. to lift the travel ban to Lebanon and become more active in the efforts to rebuild the country.



PROTEST AGAINST SIEGE: Israeli border police block Palestinian labour activists from reaching a military checkpoint separating Jerusalem from the West Bank on Saturday. The demonstration was to protest the Israeli military closure which has prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching their jobs in Arab East Jerusalem and Israel for nine straight weeks (Reuters photo)

Kuwait accuses Iraq of raids near border

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's interior minister in remarks published on Saturday accused Iraq of raids near the border to destabilise Kuwait.

The minister, Sheikh Ali Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah, added that in separate incidents Iraqis continued to try to enter Kuwait to flee poor living conditions and political problems at home.

"Recent incidents have been carried out by members of Iraqi intelligence who desperately tried to destabilise security in the country," he was quoted as saying by Al Qabas, Al Watan, the Kuwait Times and Al Seyasah newspapers.

"Such conduct shows the (Iraqi) regime's failure to respect international law," he added.

The minister did not elaborate on the alleged attacks. Kuwaiti newspapers and Interior Ministry officials have reported periodic attacks by gunmen on farms or police posts in recent months. Most alleged attacks involved theft of equipment, vehicles or money.

The 32-nation U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), which has monitored the border since the 1991 Gulf war, has received occasional complaints from Kuwaiti authorities about the alleged incidents.

But investigations into the incidents by UNIKOM observers have found no conclusive evidence indicating the identity or nationality of the assailants, diplomats say.

In the most serious security breach on the border in 18 months, gunmen attacked and looted a UNIKOM observer post on the Iraqi side of the border on March 23, UNIKOM protested to Iraq about the incident and launched an investigation.

In the latest raid, a Kuwaiti police border patrol was shot at by gunmen late on Tuesday but no one was wounded, Al Anba newspaper reported on Friday.

A UNIKOM spokesman said UNIKOM had received a complaint from Kuwaiti authorities and had started an investigation.

Iraqis have come across the border regularly to smuggle goods, scavenge equipment left on former battlefields or seek asylum in third countries since the conflict ended a seven-month Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

UNIKOM patrols 15 kilometres demilitarised border that straddles the 207 kilometres land border. Its main purpose is to ensure no military force enters the zone.

Ordinary law enforcement in the zone remains the responsibility of Kuwaiti and Iraqi police.

Greece tells Turkey to drop island claim

NICOSIA (R) — Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos on Friday urged Turkey to lift its "ultimate insult" on his country by abandoning its claim to deserted islets in the Aegean or accept arbitration by an international court.

Speaking at a news conference at the end of a two-day visit to Cyprus, divided after a Turkish invasion in 1974, Mr. Pangalos said he was convinced the Turkish government had no legal grounds on which it based its claim.

He said that even if the islet dispute is resolved, friendly relations between Greece and Turkey could only be restored once Turkey withdraws all its troops from the north part of Cyprus.

The two countries, NATO allies but for long at loggerheads over Cyprus's division, nearly clashed last January over the ownership of a deserted island in the Aegean which Athens calls Imia and Ankara calls Kardak.

"This kind of territorial claim is the ultimate insult to international order, world order and international law. We are asking that Turkey immediately lift the insult, quit the claim or go to the court in the Hague," Mr. Pangalos said.

"(Their claim) initially concerned the islands, then was generalised... from the last meeting I had with the

Turkish foreign minister it is now confined to some rocks and islets they haven't even named or numbered."

Since the outbreak of the dispute Greece has blocked the flow of European Union (EU) funds to Turkey, which it would have been eligible to receive under its customs union with the bloc.

Mr. Pangalos insinuated that Greece had no intention of lifting its blockade so long as the issue remains open.

"I am waiting to see this progress and I think the EU should also wait before funding Turkey in any way," he said.

The Greek minister, in Cyprus for talks with his Cypriot counterpart on European Union issues and an expected U.S. initiative aimed at brokering a settlement on the divided island, ruled out any chance of good relations between the two countries before a solution.

"Naturally for that to happen the Cyprus problem must be solved. We would not be smoothing over relations by going to the Hague over Imia," he said.

Turkey invaded Cyprus in the wake of a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by colonels ruling Greece in July 1974. The problem has defied all mediation attempts since to reunite the island as a bicomunal federation.

Peres keeps lead over rival Netanyahu, polls show

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres is maintaining his small but steady lead over right-wing challenger Benjamin Netanyahu in the run-up to May 29 elections, latest opinion polls show.

A survey by the Dahaf Organisation gave Mr. Peres 49 per cent of the vote compared with 44 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu. Gallup Organisation and the Maariv newspaper put support for Mr. Peres at 44 per cent to Mr. Netanyahu's 41 per cent. A Geocartographia poll in the Yedioth Ahronoth daily had Mr. Peres at 50 per cent and Mr. Netanyahu at 44 per cent.

With a four per cent margin of error, Mr. Peres's lead is small but consistent. Political analysts said that barring further suicide bombings that would sap his support, Mr. Peres was likely to win the election.

"In the last month, no one has moved, and the gap has remained stable," said Gad Wolfeld, a political scientist at Hebrew University. "It's not a big gap. One terrorist attack could make a difference."

Both Mr. Peres' Labour Party and Mr. Netanyahu's Likud have focused on security in their election posters and bumper stickers.

Playing catch-up, Mr. Netanyahu backers have coined slogans that appear to be aimed at different types of voters — those strongly opposed to Mr. Peres' peace deals with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and moderates who would want a Likud government to pursue the peace process.

"Netanyahu, I'm sure," read one bumper-sticker slogan, using a Hebrew word that also means "secure".

"Peace will succeed with Netanyahu," a poster said.

This week, Likud posters at Jerusalem's central bus station carried still a different message: "There is no security. There is no peace. There is no reason to vote for Labour."

"The main slogan is 'making a secure peace'," said Michael Stoltz, a Likud spokesman.

One Likud flyer dropped in mailboxes in Jerusalem showed a checklist with a studio picture of Mr. Netanyahu, 47, next to a snapshot of a battered-looking Peres, 73.

"Who will teach Arafat that his agreements must be kept? Who will return security to the hands of the Israeli army and not to Arafat supporters? Who will give the army and the Shin Bet (security service) a free hand in fighting terror?" the flyer said.

One poster — origin unknown — took so-called negative campaigning a step further.

It showed Mr. Peres and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in a warm gesture against the backdrop of a blown-up bus — a reminder of the suicide bombings that killed 59 people in February and March. The poster also carried a photo of an Arab in traditional headgear burning an Israeli flag.

"This is peace?" It asked.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tunisia names head of office in Tel Aviv

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia named diplomat Khemaies Jinaoui to head its interests bureau in Tel Aviv, the official Gazette said on Saturday. The nomination also included the publication of a decree signed by Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali allowing the opening of the bureau in Tel Aviv. Israel on April 15 formally opened an interests bureau in Tunis, making Tunisia the fourth Arab country after Egypt, Morocco and Jordan to establish an official channel with the Jewish state. Shalom Cohen, an Israeli diplomat born in Tunisia, heads the bureau temporarily located in a Tunis hotel. The two countries decided to establish low-level diplomatic ties in October 1994 and it took until January this year for them to agree in Washington on the level of these relations. Official sources said the Tunisian liaison bureau would be inaugurated soon pending routine administrative procedures. Tunisia, which hosted the Palestine Liberation Organisation's headquarters for more than 10 years, has a liaison bureau in the self-ruled Gaza Strip.

Iran: Iraq hindering PoWs exchange

NICOSIA (R) — Iran accused Iraq of ignoring agreements on the exchange of prisoners of war and troops missing in action during their 1980-88 war. The official Iranian news agency IRNA reported on Saturday. IRNA Brigadier General Abdullah Najafi, head of the commission in charge of Iranian prisoner of war affairs, said "hindrances made by the Baghdad regime have prevented the implementation of an agreement" between the two countries on the exchange of PoWs. "He noted that despite the Islamic republic's good will, the Iraqi government was not cooperating in this regard," IRNA said. It said Sen. Najafi "voiced Iran's readiness to discuss the matter with Iraqi officials." Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding during talks in September last year on mutual relations and the issue of the prisoners of war, but did not announce the details. Iran says 5,000 to 10,000 prisoners are still held by Iraq. Baghdad denies holding any prisoners and says more than 20,000 Iraqis are held by Iran. The prisoner issue is among the thorniest hindering improving ties between the former foes.

Two women detainees freed in Bahrain

NICOSIA (AFP) — Bahraini authorities freed two women arrested at the beginning of March in the Gulf state which has been rocked by a wave of anti-government protests, relatives said Friday. Mona Habib Al Jamri, a 32-year-old mother of three, and Salman Ibrahim Hilal, who is six months pregnant, were freed Wednesday after they each paid bail of 200 dinars (\$750), relatives contacted by AFP in Nicosia said. According to the London-based Bahrain Freedom Movement Ms. Jamri's husband has been in prison since 1988. He is the son of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, the main Shiite opposition leader who has been under arrest since January. The anti-government protests have been led mainly by Shiites demanding the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975. The Bahrain government says 600 people have been detained since the troubles began in December 1994, but lawyers said at the beginning of February that more than 2,000 had been detained since December 1995.

Kuwait, U.S. French navies start manoeuvres

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait navy sailors Saturday began a five-day live ammunition exercise with the U.S. and French navies. "Eager Sentry 2-96" was the latest in a series of manoeuvres aimed at training Kuwait's armed forces and underscoring the commitment of the small state's Western allies to its security. War games are part of 10-year defence pacts Kuwait signed with the United States, France, Britain and Russia following its February 1991 liberation from a seven-month Iraqi occupation. No details were available about the manoeuvres in Kuwait's territorial waters near the tiny island of Qaroor. But similar ones in the past included exercises on managing operation centres, reconnaissance and interception and disposal of mines. The French frigate Commandant Bory, which is equipped with four Exocet missiles, is taking part in the exercise.

Quake rocks Turkish city destroyed in 1992

ERZINCAN (AP) — A mild earthquake Saturday shook the eastern city, where a major quake killed 500 people four years ago. There were no reports of damage or casualties. The epicentre of the quake, with a preliminary magnitude of 3.6, was 90 kilometres east of the city, Istanbul's Kandilli observatory said. The tremor was also felt in neighboring Elazig province. Erzincan, 575 kilometres east of Ankara, was entirely destroyed by a 6.8-magnitude quake in 1992. Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coastal areas and the entire eastern region sit atop an earthquake-prone belt known as the Anatolian fault.

Turkey charges union for riots

ISTANBUL (AP) — The government filed charges Friday against Labour unions that organised may day celebrations that turned violent. Three people were killed and 65 injured Wednesday when several outlawed leftist groups the occasion to show their muscle, breaking windows, setting cars on fire and beating plainclothes police officers. Damage at banks, stores and government offices in the march route is estimated at \$3 million. "The organising committee was responsible for keeping the rally in line with its original aims," said Istanbul Gov. Ridvan Yenisen. The charges were not immediately disclosed.

Netanyahu says he will expand Jewish settlements

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Right-wing Likud Party opposition candidate Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday if he is elected prime minister he will expand the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, including the Jewish enclaves in Hebron.

"In Hebron we have to create a continuity of Jewish settlement from Tel Rumeida, via Bet Hadassah, to Kiryat Arba," he told Channel 2 television. "It is important that the Jewish settlement should not be under threat, in a sea of (Palestinian) autonomy."

The present Labour government virtually from Jewish settlement activity in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip when it came to power three and a half years ago. The huge sums which the previous, Likud government had been spending on settlement were diverted to education, road construction and other activities inside Israel proper.

Mr. Netanyahu said he preferred to expand existing settlements but did not rule out the possibility of establishing new ones also.

"We'll consider it... It's

very possible that we'll add new settlements."

The interview on Channel 2 marks the end of the period when candidates can be interviewed on Israel's two TV channels. Under the election laws, for the next three weeks only paid party advertisements can be screened.

With just over three weeks to polling day the Labour campaign strategists intend to exploit Mr. Netanyahu's lack of government experience, compared with that of his rival, Prime Minister Shimon Peres, the 10 years he spent in the United States and the fact that he held a U.S. pass-

port and changed his name while in the U.S. In Israel, because of the Zionist ideology of returning to the ancient homeland, there is still a stigma attached to emigration or prolonged residence abroad.

Mr. Netanyahu retorted that he was deputy foreign minister, ambassador to the United Nations, minister at the Israeli embassy in Washington, and an officer in a crack army unit.

His 10 years in the U.S. had been spent studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He had held a U.S. passport during two periods but had returned it

voluntarily.

He had used a different name "Netai" because Americans found Mr. Netanyahu difficult to pronounce, he said.

Mr. Netanyahu has been conducting an American-style campaign, appearing in public with his wife Sarah and their young children. This was criticised Thursday by the left-leaning newspaper Haaretz.

By contrast Mr. Peres never involves his wife Sonya in the campaign, because she dislikes publicity and shuns the limelight.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Channel 1: 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:00 — Cartoon — The Flintstones
15:25 — News and Mail
16:00 — News and Mail
16:30 — News and Mail
17:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
17:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
18:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
18:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
19:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
19:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
19:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
19:45 — La Vie Devant Moi
20:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
20:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
20:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
20:45 — La Vie Devant Moi
21:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
21:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
21:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
21:45 — La Vie Devant Moi
22:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
22:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
22:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
22:45 — La Vie Devant Moi
23:00 — La Vie Devant Moi
23:15 — La Vie Devant Moi
23:30 — La Vie Devant Moi
23:45 — La Vie Devant Moi
24:00 — La Vie Devant Moi

PRAYER TIMES

04:16 — Sunrise
05:42 — Sunrise
12:32 — Dhuhr
15:12 — Asr
18:49 — Maghrib
19:23 — Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swatish, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634990
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrace Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 62826

Anglican Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Anglican Orthodox Church Tel. 778261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

St. Ann International Church Tel. 625226

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Lutheran Church Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

German-speaking Lutheran Church Tel. 614190

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

Conventual

Conventual

Conventual

Conventual

Conventual

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Nidal Al As'ad 751672

Dr. Isam Al Asmar 890504

Dr. Osama Al Husam 847289

Dr. Khalid Khatib 816715

First pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 779336

Al Asma pharmacy 637055

Natourah pharmacy 626262

Al Sabah pharmacy 636781

Yacoub pharmacy 644845

Sumacian pharmacy 637660

Natourah pharmacy 626262

Najib pharmacy 847632

IBRD:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852

Alquds pharmacy 985417

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989601

Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 63021

Hotel Complaints 62800

Proc Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage

Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality

Complaints 787111

Telephone Information

(Directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Radio Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680710

Jordan Electricity Authority 816515

Electric Power

Company 636391

RJ Flight Information 08-33200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-33200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hewson Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 6442816

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palastine, Shuckani 607071

Shuckani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 645845

Al-Musader Hospital 6672279

The Islamic, Abdali 66612737

Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646

Traffic, Al-Muhajra 7771013

Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 77511726

Army, Marfa 89161115

Queen Alia Hospital 60224050

Amal Hospital 607155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)900560

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)999999

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 861199

IBRD:

Princess Basmah Hospital (02)225555



HRH Princess Sarvath El Hassan Wednesday attends the annual International Baccalaureate Organisation conference (photo by Boghos)

IBO concludes annual meeting

Pilot project on primary education slated for ABS

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) concluded a 5-day conference with the announcement of initiating a pilot project in the Amman Baccalaureate School (ABS) of a new primary school educational system as of September 1996.

The 28th meeting of the Council of Foundation, which is the decision-making body of the IBO, attended by HRH Princess Sarvath El Hassan, who founded the ABS in 1981 and is chairperson of its Board of Trustees, discussed issues pertaining to international educational development.

Princess Sarvath told the participants that the philosophy of the IB system encourages students to develop "community spirit, humanitarian principles, altruism, and tolerance," — qualities that are necessary for new leaders of the future, said the Princess.

According to Princess Sarvath "in founding the (Amman Baccalaureate) school, my colleagues and I were seeking a system of

education which in addition to the mastery of factual knowledge, stimulated and developed young people's powers of thinking. One that encouraged students to reflect on their knowledge and to develop their skills in personal research."

Haifa Dia Al-Attia, education advisor to Princess Sarvath and regional representative of the IBO for the Middle East, was elected as the Jordanian representative on the council of the IBO, which holds an annual meeting to "deal with various operations of the IBO... such as curricula and assessment," said Mrs. Dia Al-Attia.

She told the Jordan Times that the introduction of the International Baccalaureate (IB) system into primary school (grades 1 to 5) at the ABS will provide students with the necessary skills to eventually obtain the IB diploma.

She said, however, that the ABS falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and as such must follow its laws.

"We have to work within ministry regulations, and we will adopt the (IB) framework, but the content will be Jordanian... what we

have to do as a school is develop our own secondary curricula and develop our teaching method," said Mrs. Dia Al-Attia, adding that the case of the ABS is a special one as it is not an international school.

According to Mrs. Al-Attia, the challenge for the ABS is to take two curricula and integrate them, such that the regulations of the Ministry of Education are met and the standards and skills of the IB are upheld.

Mrs. Al-Attia stressed that all classes in primary school will continue to be taught in Arabic.

Currently the ABS is the only school in Jordan to offer the IB.

The conference was attended by members of the Council of Foundation, various heads of IB schools, government observers from Nigeria, Italy, Turkey, and Malta, invited observers, and members of the IB administration.

As invited to speak was Jordanian writer and journalist Rami Khouri who presented a slide show on Jordan and a brief overview of Jordan's history and important cultural sites.

Regent calls for removing ambiguities in practice of journalism

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday urged the media to help convey a positive image of Jordan and reflect the Kingdom's historic stands to the world and promote its views on domestic, regional and international issues.

In an address to the opening session of a two-day seminar entitled: "The Media and Information: Realities and Prospects," the Regent said the media also has a duty to enhance the sense of national belonging among Jordanian citizens and reflect the country's achievements in educational, cultural, and other fields.

Article 15 of the Constitution stipulates that the state guarantees freedom of expression to all Jordanians provided that such expression is conducted within the framework of the law and does not infringe on national or social security, said the Regent in his address delivered on his behalf by Minister of Information Marwan Muasher.

"The time has come for removing all ambiguity and contradiction resulting from the various interpretations of laws and regulations concerning the work of the media," said the Regent.

He said a committee established in 1988 and entrusted with developing the media and communications paved the ground for the recent introduction of amendments to the Press and Publications Law and the Jordan Press Association Law and also to open information offices abroad, start training programmes for journalists and adopt modern technology to boost the country's radio, television and news agency services.

Underlining the importance of the media, the Regent said that it is closely linked to and affected by political, economic, and cultural developments in the country and the world, adding that the media has followed the developments in the Kingdom since its establishment in 1921.

He stressed the need for continuous development of the information and media services in a manner that would cater to the needs and requirements of the modern age and the critical stage of the country's history.

Stressing the need for development, the Regent said that the current laws governing the media are void of any rules on the manner of dealing with informatics and modern technology related to the



Minister of Information Marwan Muasher Saturday attends a seminar on media and information (Petra photo)

work of the press in Jordan which remains confined to traditional methods.

Organised at the Royal Cultural Centre by the Jordanian and Islamic Centres for Studies and Information in cooperation with the Amman Municipality, the seminar will focus on several working papers dealing with the Press and Publications Law and the Jordan Press Association Law.

The opening session was addressed by Bilal Tel, head of the Jordanian Islamic Centres for Studies and Information, and Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi. The first session was chaired by Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Lower House of Parliament.

The session reviewed a working paper by lawyer

Salim Sweiss on the laws governing press and publications in Jordan which Mr. Sweiss criticised as failing to cater to the requirements of modern journalism.

He also said there was a need for amendments to regulations concerning the election of the Jordan Press Association president, the training of journalists and the appointment of newspaper editors.

Man receives death penalty for murder

AI appeals to Jordan to commute earlier death sentence

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Saturday sentenced a man to death after he was found guilty of the premeditated murder of his would-be mother-in-law in Jhal Nasser on April 4, 1995.

The court tribunal presided over by Judge Mahmoud Bawadi and including judges Ahmad Khathir and Khalaf Ragad, found Mohammad Ahmad Mohammad, 25, guilty of slaying his mother-in-law, Suhbiyeh Amin Majdalawi, 62, to death in her apartment in Jhal Nasser.

According to the prosecution, the defendant, who confessed to committing the crime, travelled from Zarqa, where he resided, to Amman on the morning of April 4, and waited until his fiancée left the house.

"Mohammad monitored the house, then went to the victim's room, drew a knife and stabbed Mrs. Majdalawi three times while she was asleep then fled the scene," the prosecution said.

In his confession to the prosecution and in court, the defendant said he had to kill Mrs. Majdalawi

because she was "constantly pressing me to marry her daughter Randa."

"I wasn't ready and I did not have the money to get married, and the only way to end her nagging was to kill her," Mohammad, a house painter said.

The verdict will be reviewed by a higher court within 30 days.

The sentence handed down Saturday is the 11th death penalty to be announced since the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, in a recent statement published by Amnesty International (AI), the human rights organisation appealed to His Majesty King Hussein and the Jordanian government to commute a recent death sentence issued in March against a 19-year-old man.

Usama Husni was sentenced to death by the Criminal Court on March 31 after he was found guilty of the premeditated murder of his eldest brother, Uqba.

The AI statement, dated April 10, urged the Jordanian government to sign the Second Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights aimed at abolishing the death penalty.

ing the death penalty.

Currently there are at least 20 individuals who are either awaiting execution or whose cases, carrying the death penalty, are being reviewed in the Court of Cassation.

Last year, eight civilians were reported executed in the Kingdom.

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed its concern to the Jordanian authorities about what the organisation sees as the increase in the use of the death penalty over the last two years.

It stated unconditional opposition to the death penalty and urged that no future executions be carried out in Jordan.

According to its tenets, Amnesty International does not condone crimes of violence, and recognises the responsibility of governments to bring the perpetrators to justice. However, it opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Envoy says Lebanon willing to extend tomato import agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — Lebanese Ambassador to Jordan William Hahih Saturday said his country is willing to extend an agreement to import Jordanian tomatoes for 10 days through May 10 and is prepared to grant Jordanian agricultural products priority in imports.

Speaking at a meeting with Minister of Agriculture Mustafa Shneikat, Mr. Hahih said Lebanon was willing to import Jordanian produce over and

above import agreement stipulations whenever there is a need for them in the Lebanese markets.

The meeting followed a statement by Dr. Shneikat in which he denied that the programme for exchanging products with Lebanon has been disrupted.

He said there were some delays in the exportation of eggplants to Lebanon because of the Eid Al Adha holiday last week, but added that future ship-

ments should continue until the end of May according to the agricultural trade agreement.

The minister said Jordan can, under the agreement, export the eggplants to Lebanon between Dec. 11 and May 30 each year.

Dr. Shneikat said he called his Lebanese counterpart to explore the prospect of exporting Jordanian potatoes to Lebanon, but was told that the country had a surplus of the tuber.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Hashem Dabbas (right) Saturday addresses a seminar on water planning management (Petra photo)

Arab specialists discuss water planning, management

AMMAN (J.T.) — The total annual underground and surface water reserves in Jordan are estimated at one billion cubic metres, but the country's water needs for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes are expected to reach far above this level in the coming years, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Hashem Dabbas said Saturday.

Addressing the opening session of a three-day seminar entitled "Integration of Information Between Oil Drilling and Hydrogeology of Deep Aquifers" held at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), Dr. Dabbas said the ministry, acting through the Natural Resources Authority (NRA), is doing all it can to deal with the situation and locate additional water resources for the country.

The scarcity of water in Islamic and Arab countries including Jordan is cause for concern to decision makers and planners who are endeavouring to find new resources to meet the challenge facing these countries in the next decades, said Dr. Dabbas.

He said water planning and management are vital to ensuring sufficient amounts of water for economic and social development and to meet the needs of growing populations in these countries.

Dr. Dabbas said many Islamic countries have been utilising the aquifers in the shallow layers underground but have not reached deep aquifers about which they know very little and lack the technology to

help them tap these resources.

Murad Bino, executive director of the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management, which is organising the meeting, told the opening session that drilling for oil and searching for water in the underground aquifers are related and the information collected from both are essential to decision makers and planners.

He expressed hope that the seminar will lead to integrated information between oil drilling and hydrogeology of deep aquifers.

Organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources/NRA, the seminar is attended by 30 specialists from Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Egypt who will explore areas for integrating information between the search for oil and underground water resources.

The participants are expected to review 25 working papers, some of which dealing with the oil drilling operations and studies of underground water in southern and central Jordanian regions, as well as water issues in the Middle East region.

The Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management is an intergovernmental organisation operating under the umbrella of the standing committee on Science and Technology Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries.



Minister of Health Aref Batayneh Saturday holds talks with visiting Bulgarian Minister of Health Mimi Mentkova. The Bulgarian minister, who arrived on an official visit to Jordan Friday, expressed hope that the Jordanian-Bulgarian relations would further develop, particularly in medical field (Petra photo)

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

*Works by Jordanian and Iraqi artists entitled "Spring Exhibition" at Oryah Art Gallery, Um Uthman, until May 7.

*Works by Palestinian artist Nasser Soum entitled "Homage to Jaffa" at Darat Fumun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 9.

*Gandhi's original photographs from May 5-9 at the Royal Cultural Centre.

FILM

*Oscar winning film "Gandhi", May 4-5 at the Royal Cultural Centre.

PANEL DISCUSSION

*Discussion entitled "The Relevance Non-Violence to Contemporary Middle East", May 5 at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Australians call for tough gun laws after massacre

HOBART, Australia (R) — Thousands of Australians marched through the streets of Hobart and Sydney Saturday demanding tougher gun laws following the country's worst shooting massacre by a lone gunman, which left 35 dead.

More than 2,500 people packed the lawns outside Parliament House in Hobart in the southern island state of Tasmania, only 50 kilometres from the site of the killings at Port Arthur, demanding politicians act swiftly to tighten gun laws. "Our innocence was violated, and we've become yet

another statistic on the international firearm catastrophe toll," Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Services Director Brian Walpole told the crowd. "Our home may never be the same again. We can and must start to build a safer and more compassionate society. The first step is to rid society of these offensive weapons," Mr. Walpole said.

"The weapons of war must never grace Australia's streets and fields again," he said. In Sydney, more than a thousand people thrived

heavy rain to rally in Hyde Park on the edge of the city's central business district, calling for a national register of all firearms, licensing of gun owners and the banning of automatic and semi-automatic weapons.

Last Sunday a lone gunman with a high-powered rifle gunned down 32 people in one hour of terror at the historic convict site of Port Arthur. By Monday morning the death toll was 35 after the gunman fled a burning cottage, leaving behind three dead hostages in the charred remains.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has proposed a total national ban on all automatic and semi-automatic firearms be accepted at a special meeting of police ministers from all six states and two territories in Canberra on May 10.

But while Tasmania has announced such a ban, and the state of New South Wales has moved to hand back gun control laws to Howard, other states such as Queensland are opposed to uniform national gun laws. Gun laws are now a state responsibility.

There are an estimated 3.5 million guns in Australia, with about 500 gun-related deaths a year.

Australian Martin Bryant, 28, has been charged with one of the murders and remains under tight police security in the Royal Hobart Hospital where he is being treated for burns to his back and buttocks. Mr. Bryant has not been required to enter a plea.

Tensions on the island of half a million people are running high, with the hospital receiving two bomb hoaxes in the past 24 hours and hospital staff receiving threatening telephone calls. Hospital officials say some staff have taken stress leave or holidays while Mr. Bryant remains in the hospital.

Mr. Bryant is expected to stay in the hospital for the next few weeks before being transferred to Hobart's Risdon Prison.



Protesters hold anti-gun placards during a demonstration in Sydney's Hyde Park Saturday. (Reuters photo)

Rao goes on offensive as Indian elections enter home stretch

NEW DELHI (Agencies) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao launched a last-ditch offensive against his opponents Saturday in the home stretch of a gruelling mid-summer general election campaign.

Mr. Rao, stumping the eastern state of Bihar, lashed out against both the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) and a centrist-left alliance seeking to oust his Congress (I) from power.

The 74-year-old premier, who has staked his political future on the polls, told a series of rallies in the town of Bhagalpur, considered a communal tinderbox, that the pro-Hindu BJP "played with the people's sentiments."

"The BJP only believes in dividing the people by inciting communal passions. Fundamentalism will grow under communalism," the Press Trust of India quoted him as saying.

He dismissed the centre-left alliance, known as the "Third Force," as a political mishmash and blamed the main centrist opposition Janata Dal (People's Party) for ruining the economy during its brief term in office in 1989-91.

"A government which could be preoccupied with ensuring its survival day-to-day cannot be expected to herald an era of peace and prosperity," said Mr. Rao, the Congress president.

His attack came on the penultimate day of campaigning before some 210 million people troop to the polls Tuesday to choose 183 representatives to the 545-member Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament.

Heavyweights whose fortunes will be decided in Tuesday's ballot include Scindia, Vajpayee, former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar.

Congress rebel leader Arjun Singh and reformer "Bandit Queen" Phoolan Devi.

Vote-counting begins Wednesday and a clear picture of the results will be known by Friday.

A peaceful re-poll was, meanwhile, held Saturday in parts of the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and the northern state of Rajasthan. Election Commission officials said.

The fresh polling, being held under heavy security, was ordered after violence and alleged rigging marred Thursday's second phase of voting.

Meanwhile a senior government minister said Prime Minister Rao should relinquish leadership of the ruling Congress Party

after the country's general elections, the Times of India newspaper reported Saturday.

"We will have to find a new (Congress) Party president after the general elections," industry minister and senior Congress member K. Karunanidhi told the newspaper in an interview published Saturday, as the last main phase of the polls approached.

It was the first time a serving minister in Mr. Rao's government had openly criticised his leadership of Congress.

Mr. Karunanidhi said that whatever the outcome of the national election, a power struggle within the party was inevitable.

"There is a feeling in the party that it has failed to cash in on the good performance of the Congress government. This is primarily due to the organisational weaknesses," Mr. Karunanidhi said.

While most senior congressmen are unwilling to discuss the party leadership openly, Mr. Karunanidhi was critical of Mr. Rao, saying he did not have enough time for party work.

He said in the interview the Congress Party had bungled over finding suitable electoral allies in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and northern Uttar Pradesh.

The party's electoral moves triggered the defections of senior party members, including former Commerce Minister P. Chidambaram, a strong advocate of the economic reforms Mr. Rao introduced in 1991.

Mr. Chidambaram, who broke away over Mr. Rao's alliance with Tamil Nadu state's ruling regional party, has also said a leadership change is in the offing.

Mr. Karunanidhi said most congressmen who had deserted Mr. Rao, including Mr. Chidambaram and former ministers like N.D. Tiwari, Arjun Singh and Madhavrao Scindia, would return to the Congress Party without Mr. Rao as its leader.

Mr. Singh, who heads a splinter Congress group — Congress (Tiwaris) — said while addressing an election rally Friday that his group would consider rejoining the original Congress if Mr. Rao was not leader.

"With Mr. Rao there, the Congress does not remain. If you want to keep a rump to perpetuate a single individual then don't talk about the Congress or unity in it," Mr. Singh said.

Analysts say Congress would need their return if it had to mobilise enough support to form a government.

Western hostages in Kashmir sighted as kidnapping enters 11th month

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Four Western hostages taken by Muslim guerrillas have been sighted in south Kashmir as their abduction entered the 11th month.

Indian army and intelligence sources said Saturday.

The hostages are safe and unharmed and being moved from hideout to hideout by their abductors within a radius of 25 kilometres around the southern Kashmir town of Anantnag, Brigadier P.P.S. Bhindra said.

Anantnag, reputed to be a Muslim militant bastion, is located 80 kilometres south of Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir.

"Our aim is to know the movement of the hostages and their kidnappers so that we keep our troops away from them to avoid direct confrontation for the safety of the Western hostages," said Bhindra.

The officer, who heads army operations in Kashmir, ruled out military action to rescue the hostages.

"Armed kidnappers, along with hostages, keep changing their hideouts," an intelligence source said. "They (hostages) were seen wearing Kashmiri

woollens, sporting a beard and looking more Kashmiri than Caucasian."

Britons Paul Wells and Keith Mangan, American Donald Hinchings and German Dirk Hasert were seized by the Al Faran guerrilla group in early July along with Norwegian Hans-Christian Ostro while trekking in the Kashmir Himalayas.

Ostro was beheaded in August by the kidnappers, who demanded the release of 15 jailed colleagues in return for his release.

The Al Faran is reputed to be a front for the Afghan-dominated Harkat-ul-Ansar.

"The government has made it very clear and taken a firm decision not to accept any conditions of Al Faran," said Brig. Bhindra, adding the governments of Britain, the United States and Germany backed the Indian stand.

"Four months ago, Al Faran militants directly tried to contact the American and British embassies but they refused to talk to the militants and told them to contact Indian government representatives," he said.

U.S., British and German

Chinese sing away their stutters

BEIJING (AFP) — A Chinese expert on stammerers has claimed a 100 per cent success rate on more than 10,000 suffering stutters, with a cure that includes asking patients to sing in railway stations, a report said Friday. Wang Wei, who cured his own boyhood stammer with the help of an acoustics professor in the 1970s, says all his patients are now able to talk perfectly and even sing — a fact backed up by public health officials in the southwestern province of Sichuan. Wang, 36, heads the Chengdu Stammer Hospital in the provincial capital and claims that most of his patients can recover normal speaking abilities in just 10 days. Wang's method features a combination of psychology, physiology, education, linguistics and medicine.

Stewardess helps to rescue fishermen

LONDON (R) — An eagle-eyed British Airways stewardess helped to save three U.S. fishermen when she happened to glance out of a porthole and spotted their ship blazing some 34,000 feet (10,500 metres) below. Jane Savage told reporters that she had been on a flight from Heathrow to New York when the clouds suddenly parted to reveal smoke rising from the water. The Boeing 747's pilot tuned into an emergency channel, picked up an automatic SOS beacon and contacted U.S. authorities, who sent a helicopter to pluck the men from a life-raft 160 kilometres off the coast of Massachusetts.

Diana said dragging heels over divorce

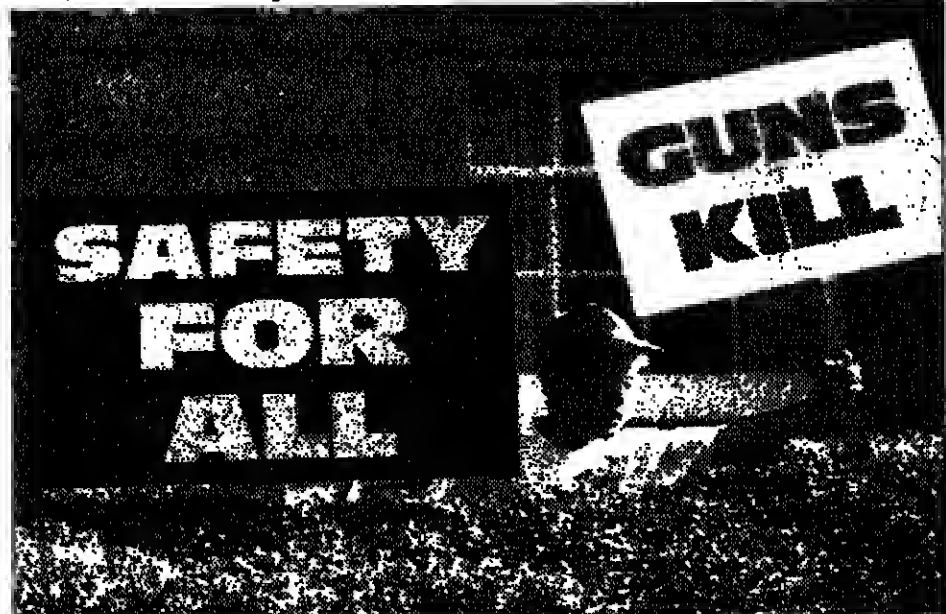
LONDON (R) — Princess Diana is threatening to make estranged husband Prince Charles wait another 20 months before granting him a divorce, the Daily Express said. The princess is resisting pressure from Prince Charles, heir to the throne, to sign a divorce petition before agreeing to the terms of a financial settlement. The Express said Queen Elizabeth was furious that the couple's discussions were deadlocked and had appealed to them to sort out their differences for the sake of their two young sons.

New York company retains rights to Titanic

NORFOLK, Virginia (R) — A New York salvage company has been granted exclusive salvage rights to the wreck of the Titanic by a U.S. federal court, which rejected a challenge by a California television producer. But the court ordered that the company, RMS Titanic Inc., must make all the artifacts recovered from the wreck available for public exhibition. The salvage company has been exploring the Titanic wreck since 1987.

U.S. State Department denies holding 'palaces'

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. State Department angrily rejected a congressional agency report that it holds on to unused "palaces" worth hundreds of millions of dollars. "Let me tell you this. We don't have any palaces. We don't have any beach-front resorts," department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. The Washington Times quoted Benjamin Nelson, the General Accounting Office's director of international relations issues, as saying the State Department could save millions of dollars by selling off "unused palaces, beach-front resorts and vacant ambassadors' residences."



A young boy rests banners on a hedge during an anti-gun rally outside Parliament House in Hobart Saturday. More than 2,500 people marched through the streets of Hobart and Sydney Saturday demanding tougher gun laws following the country's worst shooting massacre by a lone gunman, which left 35 people dead in the southern Australian island state of Tasmania on April 28 (Reuters photo)

Actor misses sex suit questions due to illness

NEW YORK (R) — Ill and allegedly in urgent need of surgery, actor George C. Scott flew to California Friday without giving a deposition in a \$3.1 million sexual harassment suit brought by his former personal assistant.

New York Supreme Court Judge Alice Schlesinger ruled Scott did not have to appear at this time because he had not been properly served by lawyers for Julie Wright, 26, who claimed the actor could die before testifying in the case.

In a lawsuit seeking more than \$3 million, Ms. Wright accused Scott making demeaning sexual comments and trying to kiss and fondle her. Outside the courthouse, her attorney, Mark Alonso, accused the Oscar-winning actor, best-known for his portrayal of Gen. George Patton, of fleeing the court's jurisdiction.

But Scott's lawyer, Daniel Markewich, said he was in immediate need of an operation to repair an aortic aneurysm and had on left Friday for California.

Scott, 68, left the Broadway show in which he was appearing, Inherit The Wind, after failing to perform Thursday night, his attorney said. Scott's stint in the show had been scheduled to end Sunday.

Scott's doctor said in a deposition that he was too ill to undergo questioning and the stress of the case could kill him. His aortic aneurysm, a weakening of the heart wall, also could kill him if he did not undergo surgery, Dr. Jess Harris of Malibu, California, said in court papers.

Due to the nature of the lawsuit, "it is not unlikely that the anxiety and stress of this procedure would cause Mr. Scott's aneurysm to burst and kill him," the doctor said.

Ms. Wright, who worked as Scott's personal assistant until last week, claims Scott said to her: "I need a pack of Lucky's, call up room service for eight bottles of Bud and a bottle of Snurffoff, and now for the real question. Will you have my baby?"

She also alleges the actor said, "I just don't understand why you won't sleep with me."

Ms. Wright was paid \$1,500 a week plus room and board to handle fan mail, run errands, take messages and make appointments, the suit said.

"I now believe the sole purpose of my employment was to satisfy Scott's sexual whims," she said in the suit. She also said Scott told her he expects to die during the operation.

A publicist for Scott called her accusations "absurd and completely untrue."



A woman who worked as a personal assistant for actor George C. Scott has accused him of sexual harassment and asked him to appear in court because she fears he may die soon. Scott is shown as Henry Drummond from a scene of the Broadway play Inherit The Wind, which closes May 5 (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin heckled but warns of Communist threat

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin, back on the campaign trail after a tour of China, faced heckling from angry pensioners Friday but said his aim remained to stop a Communist victory in next month's presidential election.

Elderly people and workers assailed Mr. Yeltsin over non-payment of pensions and salaries when he visited the town of Yaroslavl, some 250 kilometres northeast of Moscow.

"We have not been paid for four months in a row," said one elderly woman in a crowd. "The workers are being squeezed, squeezed," complained a younger woman.

The hostile reception he encountered was in line with previous reaction to the campaigning Kremlin leader from people who have lost out in Russia's transition to a market economy.

Mr. Yeltsin, 65, later called off a trip to the ancient town of Vladimir scheduled for Saturday, his office said.

There was no immediate explanation why he decided not to go to Vladimir, 160 kilometres east of Moscow and one of 16 stops he planned this month in a whirlwind regional tour.

Despite the vocal criticism, Mr. Yeltsin seemed in good humour as he strolled around Yaroslavl in brilliant spring sunshine, laying a wreath at the monument to the town's founder, Yaroslavl the Wise, and greeting a couple of young newlyweds.

But the Kremlin leader, who trails Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov in opinion polls ahead of the June 16 election, reacted sharply when a Communist war veteran asked him whether he was prepared to withdraw his candidacy.

"I will not withdraw my candidacy. I will not fight for power, but I will fight for Russia," he replied.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted him as saying that reforms had not been completed yet and that there was a real danger of a return to the Communist past if Mr. Zyuganov wins.

He acknowledged that mistakes had been made in the recent years. "But with hand on heart, could it have been otherwise?" he asked. "After all, what we did was unprecedented. Mistakes are also experience for us, our capital."

"All those years I have been and remain the guarantor of freedom," he said, adding that his opponents had been taking advantage of this freedom to attack him. "Will they preserve these freedoms if they come to power?" he asked.

Mr. Yeltsin, who looked tired at a meeting with local media leaders in Yaroslavl, has been particularly active in recent weeks despite suffering two heart attacks last year which doctors ascribed then to a heavy work-load and stress.

He hosted, in short order, a two-day summit of the Group of Seven industrialised nations on April 19-20, then a one-day summit with U.S. President Bill Clinton, before leaving on a hectic three-day tour of China from which he returned, via Kazakhstan, on April 27.

Mr. Yeltsin, according to Interfax News Agency, told people in Yaroslavl that he was in the best of health and he urged them to turn out and vote for him next month. "It will be a turning point in the history of Russia," he said.

Interfax quoted him as telling local Muslim leaders in Yaroslavl: "Pray for me and I will not give you over to the Communists. (Russian) Orthodox worshippers are praying for the president, do the same."

Mr. Zyuganov, 51, whose party made big gains in a parliamentary election last December on widespread disenchantment with Mr. Yeltsin's policies, says market reforms have bred social injustice and spawned a crime-ridden, immoral society.

Mr. Yeltsin, asked Friday about his election chances, replied: "One has to be sure (of victory) but not become complacent." ITAR-TASS news agency said.

He said Thursday that one destination in May would be the breakaway Republic of Chechnya, scene of 17 months of bitter fighting between Russian troops and separatist rebels.

He said that when he went to Chechnya he would press the idea of three-way talks involving government commission officials, rebel field commanders and the Chechnya pro-Moscow government.



The body of a soldier with Charles Taylors NPFL killed moments before in combat with Roosevelt Johnson's ULIMO-J is evacuated under fire during heavy fighting around the Barclay Training Centre. Fighting continued in the Liberian capital for the fourth straight day after a 10 day ceasefire broke down (Reuter photo)

Liberia battles continue despite Johnson departure

MONROVIA (R) — Fighting flared in the Liberian capital Saturday after ethnic Krahn warlord Roosevelt Johnson left Monrovia to take part in peace talks in Ghana.

Small arms fire and the occasional rocket-propelled grenade could be heard from the seaford west of the barracks where the Krahn are based.

The United States stepped up pressure on faction leaders to halt the fighting, demanding that they reinstate an April 19 truce, restore Monrovia as a safe haven from the civil war, and attend a West African summit in Ghana next week.

The U.S. State Department singled out Charles Taylor, who started the civil war in December 1989, and said the United States had been working very closely with Johnson.

Mr. Taylor, who had demanded Mr. Johnson's surrender as a condition for any new ceasefire, welcomed his departure as a step towards peace.

"We welcome this development," Mr. Taylor, a vice-chairman on the ruling

Council of State, told Cable News Network television Friday. "Now that he's out we can get to a cessation of hostilities."

Mr. Taylor had said Thursday there could be no ceasefire until Mr. Johnson surrendered. Rival militias fought in the city centre Friday but gunfire quietened as night fell.

Mr. Johnson flew out of the Liberian capital to Sierra Leone and on to Ghana for talks with West African leaders, who are holding a summit on May 8.

The Accra summit will consider what can be salvaged from a peace accord signed in Abuja last August, which set a timetable for disarmament and elections within a year.

Brigadier-General Gabriel Anyankpele, chief of staff of the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG, said ECOMOG drove Mr. Johnson from the city's Barclay Training Centre barracks to the U.S. embassy, from where he flew out in a U.S. helicopter.

He said two members of the ruling

council, head of state Wilton Sankawulo and elderly traditional chief Tamba Taylor, had flown to Accra.

Brig. Anyankpele said Mr. Taylor was still in the capital, despite rumours that he had left.

Mr. Taylor told CNN he would also attend the talks.

The United States said it would bar anyone deemed to be impeding the peace process from entering the country, a sanction applied several times during the six-year civil war.

"The United States is prepared to consider further measures to demonstrate its intolerance of the faction leaders' obstruction of the peace process," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

Battles in the city first began on April 6 after the council tried to arrest Mr. Johnson for murder.

A 10-day truce collapsed Monday when Mr. Taylor went to the executive mansion, the presidential complex, with his fighters, and was forced to flee under a hail of gunfire.

Chechen rebels attack Russian HQ in Grozny; one killed

MOSCOW (R) — Chechen rebels attacked the Russian Interior Ministry headquarters in the capital Grozny Saturday, killing one of the building's defenders, Interfax News Agency said.

The rebels opened fire on the headquarters from several different points for more than an hour and troops guarding the ministry shot back, it said, adding that it had no information on rebel casualties.

Chechen separatists have vowed to step up attacks against Russian troops after the death of their leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, who was killed late last month in what was believed to be a Russian rocket attack.

President Boris Yeltsin, campaigning for reelection in June, has proposed a peace plan for the region where more than 30,000 people have been killed since Moscow launched a campaign in December 1994 to quell its independence bid.

Mr. Yeltsin said earlier this week that he planned to visit Grozny in mid-May. But the rebels, who enjoy the support of many local residents, remain sceptical about Moscow's peace offers.

In separate reports, Russian news agencies said police in Moscow had arrested the former mayor of Grozny, Beslan Gantamirov, on charges of embezzling funds set aside for the reconstruction of the shattered Chechen capital.

Mr. Gantamirov, who resigned as mayor last month but continued as deputy prime minister in the Moscow-backed government, is charged with

organising the theft of several billion roubles sent to Chechnya from Russian federal coffers, Interfax said.

A spokesman for the prosecutor-general's office told AFP that Mr. Gantamirov was arrested at Moscow's Sheremetevo International Airport.

Meanwhile, Ruslan Martagov, spokesman for the pro-Moscow Chechen government of Doku Zavgayev, said Mr. Gantamirov's arrest was "a serious blow to the authority of the Chechen government," ITAR-TASS reported.

Mr. Martagov told reporters that Mr. Gantamirov, 33, "was never a close associate of Doku Zavgayev — rather, he was a figure one had to reckon with."

Mr. Gantamirov was elected mayor of Grozny in 1991, but in 1993 the city council was dissolved by force on the orders of Chechen independence leader Dzhokhar Dudayev and Mr. Gantamirov became a leader of the armed opposition to Dudayev.

After Russian troops captured Grozny in February 1995, Mr. Gantamirov was reinstated as mayor.

He became deputy prime minister in Mr. Zavgayev's government after Mr. Zavgayev won controversial elections in December 1995, which were boycotted by Dudayev's supporters.

Under Mr. Zavgayev, Mr. Gantamirov was responsible for the tax inspectorate, customs service, licensing commission and auditing service, ITAR-TASS reported.

At the end of last year a tax inspector in Grozny, who asked not to be

named, told AFP that most of the reconstruction money for Chechnya was banded by seven banks, "one of which belongs to Mr. Gantamirov, although it is officially under someone else's name."

As for the others, he named several powerful Moscow banks known to support President Boris Yeltsin's campaign for reelection in June.

Announcing his peace plan for Chechnya on March 31, Mr. Yeltsin called for a fundamental change in the allocation of financial and material resources for Chechnya, saying they "often do not reach those who need them most."

"The government has been strongly instructed to deal with abuses and ensure that aid to the (Chechen) Republic gets to the right address."

"Aid will be supplied only to districts and towns where stability has already been ensured," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Mr. Zavgayev also ordered a crackdown on embezzlement of funds allocated for reconstruction.

Chechnya's infrastructure has been devastated by the 16-month war which erupted when Moscow poured troops into the Muslim north Caucasus republic in December 1994 to crush the independence movement led by Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev took over as rebel leader after Dudayev was killed last month in what the separatists said was a targeted Russian missile attack.

France hands over former ETA leader to Spain

TOULOUSE, France (AFP) — Former head of the Basque separatist organisation ETA Jose Antonio Urrutikoetxea was handed over to Spanish authorities by France early Saturday, French police said here.

Urrutikoetxea, 46 — alias Josu Ternera — was handed over at the eastern Pyrenees frontier post of La Junquera around 2.45 a.m. (0045 GMT).

He was taken from prison in Toulouse within minutes of ending a sentence imposed in 1989 for criminal association, carrying arms and falsifying documents.

"He was taken to the frontier of the country of which he has nationality, Spain, in accordance with a ministerial expulsion order of Feb. 6, 1987," a police official said here.

The French Interior Ministry said the expulsion order had been carried out in view of "a serious threat to public order in France."

Once across the border, Urrutikoetxea was put into a Spanish police car.

Later Saturday outgoing Spanish Interior Minister Juan Alberto Belloch said Urrutikoetxea was en route for Madrid where he would be handed over to Spanish legal authorities.

Police sources, however, said Urrutikoetxea was already in the custody of Madrid police where he would undergo a medical examination.

The expulsion, protested by human rights groups in France, came just hours before new conservative Spanish Premier Jose Maria Aznar was sworn in in Madrid.

On Friday, Spain's Supreme Court had asked Madrid to revive an application for the ETA leader's extradition from France, originally made in November 1990, but which French legal authorities said they never received.

Urrutikoetxea's lawyer said in that case he should have been allowed to leave France for a destination of his choice.

Urrutikoetxea was jailed for 10 years in 1989 and banned from France for five years after his release. The sentence, with remission, ended Saturday.

El Pais said the two governments agreed on the handover late Friday.

Colombia's attorney general held as political crisis deepens

BOGOTA (AFP) — Attorney General Orlando Vasquez surrendered to authorities Friday to face charges he took money from the Cali drug cartel as the political crisis deepened around President Ernesto Samper.

He was immediately taken into custody and held at a training school for Secret Service Agents (DAS) located outside Bogota.

It was the first time in Colombia's history that an attorney general has been held in police custody, and underscored the precarious position of Mr. Samper, himself under a congressional investigation in a drug money scandal.

At an annual bankers convention Friday in Cartagena, Mr. Samper was greeted with boos and whistles as he began to address the audience. About a quarter of the 1,000 participants walked out on him.

One attendee explained that it was impossible to listen to a president "so seriously questioned about his links to drug trafficking."

Mr. Samper, visibly upset, responded to the protest in his speech, using strong language against his critics. He accused them of promoting a "character assassination" campaign against him and his colleagues, which he said "would be difficult to have a happy ending."

Mr. Samper is accused of accepting millions of dollars in contributions to his 1994 presidential campaign from the Cali cartel, the world's largest drug trafficking organisation.

The president has maintained his innocence and resisted calls for his resignation, the latest coming Friday from the head of Colombia's industrial sector.

Speaking to reporters in Cartagena, where he was attending the bankers convention, Luis Carlos Villegas, president of the National Industrial Association, said Mr. Samper must step down immediately to

avoid further damage to the country.

"If the crisis continues, we will pass from ungovernability into impossibility," he said.

The latest twist to the Samper crisis came Thursday with Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdivieso's move to arrest his attorney general.

Mr. Valdivieso alleged that Mr. Vasquez accepted cartel money to finance his 1994 failed Senate bid and that a cartel front company paid for Mr. Vasquez's stay at a luxury hotel in Cali on at least two occasions.

At the time the warrant was issued Mr. Vasquez's whereabouts were unknown. He made no comments to the press when he was arrested.

The 49-year-old attorney general, appointed by President Samper in December 1994, is accused of accepting as much as 200,000 narco-dollars.

A controversial member of the ruling Liberal Party who in the past served as interior minister, congressman and ambassador to Chile, Mr. Vasquez has insisted on his innocence.

As attorney-general, Mr. Vasquez was in charge of investigating public officials. Last week, the Supreme Court suspended Mr. Vasquez for three months for trying to obstruct Mr. Valdivieso's investigation of him.

Mr. Valdivieso's charges against him are the latest in a series of arrests in his year-long anti-corruption campaign to ferret out the link between drug money and the Samper government.

Mr. Valdivieso has already put behind bars Mr. Samper's main campaign chiefs and seven Liberal deputies.

A congressional panel was expected to recommend within days whether to call for a full trial of Mr. Samper in the Chamber of Deputies. Mr. Samper has been accused of knowingly taking \$6 million in drug money for his 1994 electoral campaign.

U.S. Republicans add on billions of dollars more for defence

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Republicans have added about \$13 billion to President Bill Clinton's proposed 1997 military budget in defence authorisation bills approved by key congressional committees this week.

The bills reflect Republican election-year priorities: Greater spending on weapons and more money for development of a controversial national missile defence programme.

Overall, the authorisation bills passed by the House National Security Committee Wednesday and by the Senate Armed Services Committee Thursday would be a sizeable jump from Mr. Clinton's requested \$254.4 billion to \$267.3 billion.

On the broader issue of spending on weapons, there was bipartisan concern that a 40 per cent cut in spending since 1983 threatened to leave the military with no replacements as existing weapons systems become outdated.

"I support the committee's emphasis on modernisation in the procurement and re-search and development accounts," Senator Sam Nunn said Friday.

"Some of the provisions in the committee bill will be the subject of vigorous debate, but I am confident that we will work together to produce a national defence authorisation bill that supports our national security," he said.

Although the increased spending on fighters, warships and submarines is aimed at halting the procurement slide, it also appeared tailored to reinforce the Republicans' image as the party that most favours a strong military.

As part of that, it adds \$350 million for national missile defences and \$386 million for theatre missile defence programmes that the Clinton administration had de-emphasised. The Senate added \$855.9 million for ballistic missile defences, including \$300 million for national missile defences and the rest for theatre missile defences.

The two bills must be reconciled after going to a vote in their respective houses.

The administration sought to shift spending from national missile defences and higher-altitude theatre missile defences to shorter range battlefield missile defences.

It argued there was no immediate threat of an intercontinental ballistic missile attack against the United States, while U.S. military forces were exposed to the threat posed by shorter-range ballistic missiles.

White House sees return of 'nasty negative Dole'

WASHINGTON (R) — The White House took a swipe at presumptive Republican presidential nominee Sen. Bob Dole Friday, predicting Americans would see a return of "the nasty, negative Bob Dole" in the election campaign.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry began his daily briefing, which followed a news conference on the April jobless figures, by accusing Sen. Dole campaign strategists of advising the Republican to turn to negative campaign tactics.

"Now that the economy is performing so strongly, Senator Dole's advisers (are) suggesting that Senator Dole will have to resort to very negative campaign tactics in order to make any headway in his campaign," Mr. McCurry said.

"The unfortunate bad news that goes with this good economic news is that we're about to see the return of the old Bob Dole, the nasty, negative Bob Dole," he added.

The White House spokesman was launching a pre-emptive strike against a speech Sen. Dole is scheduled to give Friday in Nassau County, New York, where he was expected to attack President Bill Clinton's vetoes of Republican-sponsored bills.

The Clinton administration has grabbed every opportunity to point recent economic data, including Friday's announcement that unemployment fell to 5.4 per cent in April from 5.6 in March, in the most politically attractive light.

On Friday, it orchestrated a news conference that included Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Labour Secretary Robert Reich to talk up the figures, which showed that only 2,000 jobs were created last month after 178,000 in March.

Historically, solid economic growth is correlated with a strong showing at the polls by an incumbent president. If the economy remains healthy, it is likely to be a growing problem for Sen. Dole, who currently lags Mr. Clinton by about 20 percentage points in opinion polls.

Mr. McCurry's comments about Sen. Dole, which were in his opening statement and were not prompted by a question, were themselves a case-in-point of negative campaigning.

The White House spokesman seemed to be trying to resurrect the image of Sen. Dole as partisan hatchman, a reputation that dates to the 1976 presidential campaign when the Republican was President Gerald Ford's running mate.

Sen. Dole was widely criticised then for claiming that Democrats were responsible for America's wars, citing the fact that Democrats were in the White House at the outbreak of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

The image returned in 1988 when Sen. Dole snapped at George Bush to "stop lying about my record" after Sen. Dole lost the critical New Hampshire presidential primary to Mr. Bush, who went on to win the presidency.

Dole campaign officials were not immediately available for comment.

Tigers blast power lines amid stepped up violence

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger rebels blasted power pylons in north-eastern Sri Lanka Saturday, cutting off electricity and stepping up attacks in the region, military officials said.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) used explosives to bring down two pylons at Thampalagam in the district of Trincomalee where they also shot dead two police constables, the officials said.

"The terrorists have damaged the main high tension power line to Trincomalee," a local official said. "It will be some time before we can restore the supply."

The two constables were killed in the same district at the town of Muttur. Tigers also fired a barrage of mortar bombs at an army outpost in the eastern province Saturday, wounding five soldiers, the Defence Ministry said.

Earlier last month, the Tigers destroyed high tension power lines in Trincomalee but the authorities were able to make alternative arrangements to restore electricity supply.

The Tiger guerrillas have stepped up their attacks against security forces as well as sabotage of public utilities in the east of the country following the military setbacks suffered by them in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Security forces were Saturday consolidating in areas of the peninsula wrested from the Tigers for the first time in 10 years, while nearly 250,000 Tamil civilians have crossed rebel lines and entered government controlled areas.

On Friday, the Tigers blasted a navy boat taking food to leprosy patients and killed seven security personnel and wounded three others.

The Tigers are leading a protracted campaign for independence in the northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 50,000 people have died in bitter fighting since 1972.

Italy's Di Pietro to become public works minister

ROME (R) — Antonio Di Pietro, the former anti-corruption magistrate whose probes swept away Italy's old political order, said Saturday he was willing to be a minister in a new centre-left government.

"I believe the work of the ministry of public works to be the natural continuation of what was carried out by 'mani pulite' (clean hands)," Mr. Di Pietro said in a letter to centre-left Olive Tree bloc leader Romano Prodi.

"Earlier it was a question of exposing how the links between politics and business had deteriorated, now it's a question of laying the foundations for transparency in the renewal of investment and business initiatives," he wrote.

Mr. Di Pietro, regularly named as Italy's most respected personality in opinion polls, was the star of the Milan "clean hands" team of anti-graft inves-

tigators who from 1992 exposed widespread corruption in Italian party politics.

He quit suddenly as a magistrate in December 1994 and has subsequently set himself up as a moral commentator.

The Olive Tree bloc won control of the Senate in Italy's April 21 general election but depends on the support of the hardline marxists of Communist Refoundation for a majority in the Chamber of Deputies.

Mr. Prodi, who cannot be asked officially by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to form Italy's 55th postwar government until parliament has chosen its two speakers later this month, confirmed he had approached Mr. Di Pietro.

"There is an agreement and it's deep, clear and simple. If I am asked to form a government — because we must not

forget that this is required first — I will ask Di Pietro to accept the ministry of public works," he told reporters.

"He, as you know, has said he is willing to accept it and join us in this great adventure."

Mr. Prodi said there had been no haggling with Mr. Di Pietro over office while the former magistrate said in a newspaper interview published Saturday that he had not been asked to "make a declaration of faith" to the centre-left.

Mr. Di Pietro, who had spoken recently of entering politics as an "autonomous force," assured Mr. Prodi he did not intend to form a new centrist party of his own.

"I agree with the main points of your programme," he told Mr. Prodi in a faxed letter of acceptance dated May 2.

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The danger lingers

THE GENEVA conference on anti-personnel landmines has ended with a sober recognition that there is still a long way to go before the menace of nearly 100 million landmines scattered all over the world can be ended. Delegates from 55 countries, which participated in the two-week conference, were only able to tighten the rules on the deployment and manufacture of mines but failed to outlaw them altogether. Some 30 countries and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been demanding a total ban on the use and manufacture of mines due to the heavy toll that they take on innocent lives, especially in the developing countries. It is estimated that hidden, undetectable or forgotten landmines left behind by armed conflicts maim or kill about 25,000 innocent civilians every year, many of them are children at play or farmers tilling their fields.

The nature of anti-personnel mines as indiscriminate tools for death and destruction is what prompted the ICRC and scores of nations headed by Sweden to call for a total ban on their deployment. Still, as Mr. Johan Molander of Sweden, the chairman of the Geneva meeting, has commented at the conclusion of the deliberations, the limited achievements could nevertheless save "many, many lives" if applied in full. On the plus side, the new pact regulating the use of landmines will outlaw undetectable mines and stipulates that all anti-personnel mines contain metal objects to make them detectable. This is no small achievement because much of the fatalities or injuries caused by mines are attributable to undetectable mines.

The new agreement also walks the extra mile in the direction of reducing the indiscriminate impact of mines by making most of them self-destruct within 30 to 120 days. This feature may take care of the millions of mines that continue to cause death and injuries many years after the end of hostilities.

Of course, there can be no acceptable solution to the problem posed by mines other than a total ban on them. In recognition of the insufficiency of current international action on this subject, ICRC described the results of the Geneva meeting as simply "very, very weak and very, very modest." The quest for total prohibition of the deployment or manufacture of anti-personnel mines should, therefore, remain the ultimate objective of mankind. Till that moment arrives, we can only take comfort at the fact that some progress has been attained to limit the dire consequences of landmines on human life.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON a visit to Ankara by the Egyptian foreign minister to discuss Turkey's recent military deal with Israel, a writer for Al Rai said Saturday that Egypt had received assurances from Turkey that its deal with Israel is not strategic in nature and does not have a specific military objective. If this is so, then Syria and Egypt have nothing to worry about and the Turkish-Israeli relations are not expected to become strained, said Mahmoud Rimawi. Following his visit, the Egyptian minister said Cairo was satisfied with Turkey's explanation of the situation and felt that Syria had nothing to fear from the deal despite its already strained ties with Ankara over the Turkish plans to reduce the quantities of river water flowing into Syria and Damascus's hoisting of Kurdish rebels and training Kurdish groups to create trouble for Turkey, according to the writer. Indeed, since Cairo has received such assurances, it could play a key role in reconciling Damascus with Ankara and help both sides settle their differences, especially as both Syria and Turkey have declared their stand vis-à-vis Iraq and have agreed that the Kurds must not be able to create an independent state, added the writer. He said that Ankara has all the reasons not to play up its deal with Israel because it does not want to worsen its ties with the Arab countries on the one hand and because it has already faced strong opposition to the deal from the Turkish political parties.

COMMENTING ON Israel's announcement that it will delay its pull out from Hebron until after the Israeli parliamentary elections, Al Dussour daily said Saturday that this reflects badly on the whole peace process and constitutes a violation of the Oslo agreements. The paper said that the delay poses a major obstacle to the delegations gathering in Taba today to discuss steps for the final settlement of the Palestine question and casts new doubts on Israel's real intentions. Observers believe that Shimon Peres does go wish to endanger his Labour Party's position in the coming elections by taking a decision that might anger the Jewish settlers in Hebron, but this irresponsible stand does not augur well for future Palestinian-Israeli relations, said the paper. If Israel is dragging its feet over the question of withdrawal from Hebron as agreed in Oslo, what could be expected from the Jewish state in the coming negotiations over the status of Jerusalem, the refugees and the settlements in the Taba negotiations? asked the paper. U.S. President Bill Clinton who has asked President Yasser Arafat to help facilitate the Taba negotiations, said the paper, is called on the urge Israel to also honour its commitments and fulfil its promises.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

1996 economic targets evaluated

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

FOUR MAIN targets were set in advance by the economic adjustment programme, agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to be achieved in 1996. It pays to point out those targets and subject them to an early evaluation, to determine the extent of success or failure of the official policies in the attempt to reach the targets.

The first target is a real economic growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) at a rate of not less than 6.5 per cent. Under the circumstances, this is obviously a very ambitious objective. The current tentative estimates indicate that it will not be fully achieved. The real economic growth of GDP in 1996 will, most likely, range at around 5 per cent. This would be good enough had it not been for the extraordinary high annual growth rate of the population, which is over 3 per cent. Population growth makes the improvement in the standard of living difficult objective indeed.

The second economic target for 1996 is the containment of inflation, keeping it at below 3.5 per cent, despite the impact of higher rates of indirect taxes, especially sales tax and the planned reduction of subsidies on basic goods and services such as water, electricity, bread and animal feed. This is also an ambitious target. It may look realistic in comparison with the low inflation rates which were experienced over the past two years. However, today's most conservative forecasts for inflation in 1996 put inflation at 6 per cent. It could be more.

The third target is to achieve another reduction in the deficit of the current account of the balance of payments, to go below 4 per cent of the GDP. It is still too early to pass judgment on the extent of success in approaching

this target. However, the huge jump of 24 per cent in imports during the first month of this year, in comparison with the same period of last year, is a troubling sign to say the least.

The fourth target is to further build the net reserve in foreign exchange of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) by adding some \$150 million, so that it exceeds \$600 million by the end of 1996. Most likely this objective, or something very close, may be realised. However, success in this respect depends on several factors, some of which are external and accordingly not under the control of the authorities, while others are domestic and related to the level of confidence in the future of the Jordanian dinar.

Public confidence in the dinars does not require the concerned officials in the government and the CBJ to do much; suffice it to cease issuing unwarranted announcements which the public is ready to misunderstand.

In general, the expected economic results of 1996 will be mixed. Even if not all the main economic objectives are achieved as planned, the economy will continue to show positive signs, and the overall economic indicators will give favourable readings, which may be less than hoped.

The above is my own assessment based on the available information. The government is expected to conduct a thorough and timely evaluation, so that it can modify its policies if necessary and accelerate efforts to achieve the objectives of 1996.

An IMF delegation arrived Saturday in Amman to conduct their usual mid-year evaluation. Hopefully the results will be satisfactory, and no tougher measures will be needed.

Victory or defeat of a 'giant'
— Israel should know

By G. H. Jansen

"It is excellent to have a giant's strength. But it is tyrannous to use it like a giant."

And Shakespeare, in "Measure for Measure" would have said: And even worse when the giant, in this case Israel, uses its giant's strength clumsily and inefficiently.

For, precisely two minutes before the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah was due to take effect at 04:00 a.m. on April 27, after 17 days of heavy firing in the "Grapes of Wrath" operation, Hizbollah fired a Katyusha into Israel which hit a building in the northern settlement of Kiryat Shimonah.

Little wonder, then, that the mayor of Kiryat Shimonah described the "Grapes of Wrath" as a "failure" because the proclaimed objective of that operation was to stop Hizbollah firing Katyusha rockets into northern Israel. Yet at the very end of the operation the threat, actively, was still there.

This proves that all of Israel's massive firepower was of no use and that should give Israel pause and time to consider whether its quantitative superiority in material is enough to permit Israel to obliterate and subdue its Arab enemies. So far, obviously not. To emphasise the Israeli failure, not only military but also political and diplomatic, it took only 78 hours after the laboriously worked out ceasefire for Hizbollah to resume shooting mortar bombs into Israel's "security zone" in South Lebanon. More than one commentator had predicted that the ceasefire would not hold, but no one thought that it would be challenged so quickly.

Thanks to an apparently limitless supply of arms from the U.S. to Israel — Israel's gift to the U.S. arms industry — Israel could virtually deluge South Lebanon with high explosives. A count by U.N. peacekeepers shows that there were 3,000 aerial sorties by fighter bombers and helicopter

gunships over the 17 days; 30,000 artillery shells were fired, plus hundreds of shells from navy ships offshore. By contrast, Hizbollah loosed off 1,100 Katyushas during this period.

Israel's huge weight of metal was supposed to be aimed at Hizbollah firing points and yet Israel claims to have killed only 50-60 Hizbollah fighters, while the militia itself admits to 17 killed.

Clearly Israeli shooting could not have been very accurate, despite the fact that Israel seeks and the U.S. supplies the latest state-of-the-art sophisticated weaponry, particularly in this battle of computerised range finder. Considering the number of times the Israelis blamed their killing of civilians on "human error" perhaps some of these weapons were too sophisticated even for Israeli soldiers. (This was the case with the newest weapons given by the U.S. to Pakistani soldiers for use in the tank battles in the Indo-Pakistan conflict in the Punjab). This example shows that not only Third World countries should be wary of the latest American toys because they could be beyond the technical capacity of the soldier.

The Israelis have never really accepted the vital truth of the Napoleonic dictum that in war the spiritual is to the material as three to one. Hence the basic Israeli error to think that massive bombardment by air, land and sea from a force of 20,000 or 30,000 men would make the Hizbollah resistance, 500-800 of them, break and run. But that did not happen.

But numbers can be misleading because the only regular army involved, that of Israel, did not use any of its infantry units. The regular army was present with artillery units, which played the major role. The army was also there with its tanks which were used as mobile artillery. Israel at times shifted its tanks back and forth near the border for morale and psychological purposes.

The reason for Israel's strange withholding of its infantry and armour is that

when Israeli soldiers meet Arab soldiers face to face, the Israelis do badly. Also, Israeli Premier Shimon Peres, facing imminent and difficult general elections, did not dare run the risk of Israelis coming home in body bags from an operation for which he, personally, was responsible.

In at least two of Israel's offensives against Lebanon, the deterrent or punitive effect was ruined by a mistaken massacre. The first was the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra-Shatila camps near Beirut in 1982 during the so-called "Peace for Galilee" operation. This was repeated in this time in the U.N. Fijian camp at Cana when over 100 civilian men, women and children were slaughtered. Like Sabra-Shatila, it produced worldwide revulsion, but unlike Sabra-Shatila, nothing much inside Israel, which in the intervening 14 days has evidently become hardened to its criminal behaviour.

Cana caused an outcry because the 12 shells that killed the refugees were fired into the heart of the Fijian compound and continued to fall over a period of 10-12 minutes after the U.N. had told the Israelis to stop firing. This was due to "human error," according to the Israelis who also claim that they "did not know" there were civilians in the camp, although a senior U.N. official had given them that very information two clear days, 49 hours, before the massacre.

The strong accusation, by the world community, of the civilised world, of this abomination was shown when representatives from all the continents of the multinational U.N. force, UNIFIL, attended the mass funeral of the massacre victims.

"Grapes of Wrath" was a long-distance offensive, a state-of-the-art technological assault in which the state-of-the-art Israelis should have but did not have the advantage over their low-tech Arab enemies.

The inevitable post mortem attempts to find reasons for the poor showing of the Israel

army have focused on its leadership, particularly that of Major General Amnon Levine, who admitted last year in an interview that the army routinely shot dead wounded Hizbollah guerrillas. The generalship in this campaign has been compared by Israeli observers to that of a general in the 1950s of whom it was said he was "so stupid that even the other generals noticed".

There would also seem to have been friction and lack of coordination between civilian and military leaders, with the generals taking the bit between their teeth and doing more than was ordered. General Giora Ilbar, commanding in the "security zone," said in so many words that the army would not bow to any inexperienced politician when it came to carrying the battle to the enemy.

This operation not only showed the Israel army's incompetence, it also permitted Lebanon to oust Israel. It is now known that the cutting-off of the electricity supply to most of Lebanon, thought to have been caused by Israeli bombing of power stations, was actually a result of a deliberate switch-off by the government. This tricked the Israelis into calling off further attacks on a facility supposedly already out of action. Power was switched on into full operation as soon as the ceasefire "understanding" was reached, to the amused delight and relief of the Lebanese.

Will the obvious failure and the tragic debacle of this operation convince Israel that "behaving like a giant" is fruitless and that, as so often repeated by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, only negotiations can really resolve problems? Probably not, because of the blind, indiscriminating support given to the Jewish state by the United States.

The Lebanese public is wondering whether Israel, both civil and military, has learnt the main lesson of "Grapes of Wrath" — that victory does not always go to the side using a giant's strength like a giant.

Big countries, sanctions and free trade

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS are interruptions or threats to interrupt trade or economic relations between countries in order to change the policies of the targeted nation. Sanctions that involve a form of denial or the imposition of some barriers on the imports of a nation are known as "trade boycotts"; and those that involve a form of denial of exports are called "embargoes".

The primary focus in economics and politics is on whether sanctions are effective or not in bringing about the desired policy changes. For example, the U.S. embargo placed on American grain exports to the former USSR over the latter's invasion of Afghanistan failed badly as other countries saw a chance to increase their own grain exports to the USSR. Among these countries was Argentina which led the unravelling of the sanction effort by increasing its grain exports to the Soviets in spite of an initial promise of acquiescence to the U.S.

The U.S., which supposedly champions free trade and supports free market systems all over the world, has initiated over 80 per cent of all economic boycotts that have been imposed in the last hundred years. Additionally, the U.S. presence in any trade sanction activity is a major requirement for the success of the sanction. Why? For trade sanctions to work, the country being embargoed has to be small so that the boycotting or embargoing nations do not suffer great economic losses. For extended periods; one of the countries boycotting the subject nation has to be large in order to punish offenders and compensate members of the team for losses; and the embargo has to be complete or supported by the majority of the trading nations in order to sustain damage and avoid cheaters.

Recently, the United States of America submitted complaints to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) against Portugal, Turkey, India and Pakistan for failing to maintain their commitments on intellectual property rights. Portugal will be taken to the WTO by the U.S. this year over an inadequate patent law; Turkey is in trouble for placing discriminatory taxes on box office revenues from foreign films; India and Pakistan do not have patent protection for pharmaceutical and agricultural/chemical products but they have a few years still to implement protection under the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Measures in Intellectual Property (TRIPS), so they will escape the wrath of the U.S. for several years.

Political pressure in the U.S. has been mounting to impose sanctions on China for the failure of the latter to close down the numerous factories which produce pirated computer software and videos. China, with exports to the U.S.

valued at \$2 billion last year, has been threatened with sanctions in the form of punitive tariffs. Most significantly, the imposition of such tariffs is contrary to the Most Favourable Nations status that the U.S. granted to China.

Do big countries always play fair in international trade? The answer is negative. Recall how the U.S. during the early Reagan years convinced Japan to voluntarily reduce its exports to cars to the U.S. upon the protectionist's outcry of the U.S. auto makers. This protectionist policy hurt the U.S. consumer and the Japanese producer as it created a \$14 billion bonanza to the U.S. auto manufacturers which according to Lester Thurow, the MIT economist, was squandered on non-quality improvement-related investments. Bush tried the same tactics with the Japanese towards the end of his term in a campaign move to blame the outside world for the U.S. economic downturn that was partially caused by his somewhat confused economic policies.

So what does all this have to do with Jordan? Free trade does not mean fair trade. Most economic theories in support of free trade are based on the assumption that all nations are almost the same size and they can negotiate their agreements wilfully to achieve efficient outcomes.

"Big countries can dictate policy, dominate negotiations, impose sanctions, and they never have to play by the rules. Small countries must play by the rules, adhere to covenants and plan strategically for their approach to free trade."

Not a real world scenario if one considers politics and the harsh economic realities of the world. However, as an advocate of free trade, globalisation and the integration of Jordan into the world market, I must underscore that our entry into the world economy will greatly benefit Jordan if we know the rules of the game. Big countries can dictate policy, dominate negotiations, impose sanctions, and they never have to play by the rules. Small countries, such as Jordan, Pakistan, Turkey and India, must play by the rules, adhere to the covenants they have signed and plan strategically for their approach to free trade in our increasingly interdependent world. We should never view free trade as a panacea for all the ills of Jordan; always remember that Jordan is a small country whose skill at obtaining whatever gains it desires will have to be viewed in the context of who is "big" and who is "small."

'All Hamas militants in jail'

(Continued from page 12)

of Hamas of trying to topple the PNA in order to resume the armed struggle for the creation of a Palestinian Islamic state.

The PNA has arrested hundreds of Hamas militants since the group carried out three suicide bombings in Israel in an effort to torpedo the peace process.

Israel has also arrested hundreds of militants.

Col. Dahlan charges that Hamas has given a massive boost to the budget for its activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the launch of Palestinian autonomy in May 1994.

"Hamas has set a budget of \$1 million a month to finance their activities in the Palestinian territories," he said.

Col. Dahlan revealed that his services were holding "dozens of people" charged with collaborating with Israeli occupation forces.

"We have refused Israeli demands for them to be handed over and the accused will be tried by Palestinian courts for espionage," he said.

Yassin calls played down

Hamas played down Saturday a call from its jailed spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin for coexistence with Israel.

Sheikh Yassin's remarks were "fabricated by the Shin Bet (Israeli intelligence service) which exploited his illness and bad (prison) conditions," charged Amman-based Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghoshah.

The sheikh, jailed for life in Israel seven years ago, called on Israeli television on Friday for Palestinian-Israeli coexistence.

"Why not make peace with Israel? Peace is necessary. The Palestinian people have to live side by side with the State of Israel," said the sheikh for implication in the murder of an Israeli soldier.

Sheikh Yassin said that "if the Israelis had given the Palestinian people all their rights, the Palestinians would already have recognised the State of Israel."

But Mr. Ghoshah said Hamas position was unchanged.

"We reiterate our invariable stance since the movement's birth in 1987: holding on to Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean and pursuing the resistance strategy until liberation," Mr. Ghoshah told AFP.

He said Hamas was not in a position "to discuss Sheikh Yassin's remarks so long as he remains behind bars."

"When our symbol has been discharged away from pressure and blackmail, we could look into and discuss his statements."

The spiritual leader's calls, according to Mr. Ghoshah, are not binding. "Our decision are hammered out by the political leadership in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the diaspora."

Sheikh Yassin on Thursday, also on Israeli television, called for his supporters to return the body of a soldier kidnapped and killed seven years ago, after meeting the Israeli's mother.

Mr. Ghoshah, meanwhile, said Israel's refusal to set a timetable for its army's redeployment from the West Bank town of Hebron was "a slap in the face for the Palestinian National Authority" and its concessions.

The delay until after the Israeli elections on May 29 "reflects the nature of the Zionists who cannot be handled through negotiations and concessions but rather through resistance," he said.

Saudi cleric attacks peace process

(Continued from page 12)

wrecked homes in its shadow... and considers the reply to aggression to be terrorism?" he asked.

"They are building a fragile peace which will fall apart each time an angry wind blows," added the imam. "Those who make the decision and who use force to pacify opponents of the peace process are following a false path."

Sheikh Hamed criticised "world leaders who fly into

Newspapers scramble to the net, but doubts remain

By Neil Winton
Reuters

LONDON — Newspapers and magazines are falling over themselves to publish on the Internet, but doubts remain whether potential readers will find computer delivery attractive compared with traditional methods.

Subscriptions to newspapers and magazines in Europe, delivered across the worldwide network of personal computers, will increase by 150 per cent a year between now and 2000, according to the technology consultancy Datamonitor.

Earlier this year German media giant Bertelsmann said its multimedia sales would hit two billion marks (\$1.38 billion) by 2000, boosted by its linkup with Internet pioneer America online.

Even U.S. software leader Microsoft is offering its customers news and multimedia services.

But some analysts wonder whether people are willing to pay significant money to get news on a computer. They say that newspapers and magazines deliver a sophisticated, user-friendly and keenly priced product perfected over decades.

And many pioneer Internet users seeking a news

briefing have quickly returned to traditional methods saying connections are maddeningly slow and systems often impenetrable.

Undeterred, Dow Jones, publisher of the Wall Street Journal, this week announced the launch of its interactive edition. This will be delivered across the Internet and promises updated news 24 hours a day, stock prices, and background information.

Philip Revzin, editor and publisher of the Wall Street Journal Europe said the new product was aimed at small and professional investors. He wouldn't reveal the subscriber target, or how much money had been allocated in the project.

"The only benchmark we have is the 350,000 people who registered for money and investment update," Mr. Revzin said.

This was a free Internet service offered last July. The new interactive edition will cost \$49.95 a year.

"We will find a (global) market, but it is two million people or four million people or 500,000, I don't know," Mr. Revzin told Reuters.

"The point is to get a whole new class of people watching this. People who are searching for informa-



tion, small investors, professional investors. Bloomberg and Reuters (Holdings Plc) might have some of that market," Mr. Revzin said.

Datamonitor believes that

2,586,000 households will have signed up for Online news services in Europe by 2000. But like many projections in these new computer driven markets, they show extraordinary extrapolations from piffing current sales.

Datamonitor reckons that 31,000 European households currently subscribe to Online services. Hundreds of newspapers

across the globe have published on the World Wide Web. But many just dump the print edition on the net without tailoring it for electronic publishing. This is known as "shovel-

ware" and explains why most newspapers are available free on the Internet.

Analysts say that persuading people to pay for information on the Internet is difficult, but by no means impossible.

"Getting people to pay is a significant move, but it would be our view that if you have a strong enough name and position in the market and aim at business users, there's no reason why they would fail to pay," said Adam Daum, senior analyst at high technology consultancy Inteco.

"Companies like (Pearson's) the Financial Times and Wall Street Journal, if they make the thing attractive and put in the hypertext links, can carry this off," Mr. Daum said.

Hypertext allows the reader to delve deep into databases with the click of a mouse. An underlined word in a story would signal the place to click for related information.

Datamonitor says Germany will dominate the market in Europe by 2000, accounting for about 50 per cent of all subscribers to Online news and magazine services. Britain would be in second place, closely followed by Holland and France.

Romanian digs deep into cave mysteries

By Roxana Dascalescu
Reuters

BUCHAREST — A biologist who defected from communist Romania just after he discovered a cave with previously unknown life forms, has returned to his native country with still greater discoveries in sight.

Serban Sarbu, who left Romania in 1987, was among the first men to crawl into the Movile cave on the Black Sea coast, when it was discovered by chance 10 years ago.

Some 20 metres underground, he entered a world of bizarre creatures, which have evolved over millions of years without depending for energy on the light of the sun.

Only recently have the secrets of Movile been revealed to the world.

Its life-forms, mostly blind invertebrates, have earned the Movile cave its nickname of "Rip Van Winkle of the biological world", and Mr. Sarbu his international reputation.

Back to Romania with an American Fulbright grant, Mr. Sarbu, who works on a doctoral thesis at the University of Cincinnati, disclosed his plans to search for more clues which might lie beyond the clay walls of his favourite cave.

"The Movile cave is unique from a biological point of view... Now we hope to discover a bigger cave which we believe lies near it," he told a news conference at the U.S. Cultural Centre in Bucharest.

The U.S. grant will allow him to pursue his research at the small seaside cave, which has so far yielded 33 previously unknown life forms that have never seen the light of day.

Those strange creatures,

trapped for millions of years in the darkness of the Movile cave, are living instead on chemical energy provided from hydrogen sulphide in groundwater.

The only known parallels to the Movile creatures are lying several thousand metres deep, around vents on the ocean floor. Access to those deep-sea creatures is immensely more difficult for researchers than to those in the Movile cave.

Of the 50 invertebrates identified so far at Movile, 33 are unique to the cave, such as translucent centipedes or leeches that feed on worms and "suck them like spaghetti," Mr. Sarbu said.

A former biology teacher at a German high school in Bucharest, Mr. Sarbu, now in his forties, started exploring the cave when it was accidentally uncovered by construction work in 1986.

He stopped his studies in 1987, when he fled the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's government and only resumed them in 1990, when he was able to return after the communists fell.

Mr. Sarbu recently entranced a small Bucharest audience, including his former pupils and university teachers, with a description of the cave as an underworld populated by strange inhabitants.

"My favourite is this isopod," said the bearded, softly-spoken scientist, pointing to the picture of a form of a "white pill bug", looking like a disc of aspirin, which has lived isolated from its relatives for nearly one million years.

The oldest creatures include blind water scorpions, which appear to have evolved on their own for

anything between two and five million years.

Theory has it that they or their ancestors were trapped in the cave some 5-1/2 million years ago, long after the last dinosaurs had become extinct, at a time when the evolution of man was still a remote prospect.

Mr. Sarbu has explored the underwater system at Movile, which teems with blind shrimp, snails, eels, crabs, mussels and tube worms all in their eerie world of total darkness.

Other cave-dwellers, spiders or insects, live near sulphur-rich water in the lower sections of the cave and have grown unusually long legs and antennae over the aeons, to make up for the absence of light from their environment.

Seven months after it was opened to the outside world, Mr. Sarbu's fellow explorers sealed the mouth of the cave with a system of high security gates to protect it from unwanted visitors and preserve its precious ecosystem intact.

With U.S. research funds, they built a laboratory in the nearby town of Mangalia in 1992, to recreate the special conditions in the cave, by pumping up sulphur-laden water from 400 metres underground.

Conditions inside the cave are so delicate that only three visitors are allowed in at a time.

"It is one of the best protected caves in Romania," said Mr. Sarbu. He expects a team of German researchers in start work there later this month, to see how the Movile creatures might have developed in the dark environment which, apart from being scary, is poisonous because of the hydrogen sulphide.

Scientists map universe to its edge via radio waves

By Adam Tanner
Reuters

THE PLAINS OF SAN AGUSTIN, New Mexico

— Using an array of 27 massive antennas in an isolated valley, astronomers are mapping the entire sky to the outer reaches of space, peering back billions of years into a time capsule of the early universe.

The three-year project, to be completed this summer, has shown that stars, galaxies and other basic features of space are similar everywhere, which means the chance of life developing is equal across the universe, scientists say.

"It's easy to just see from the data that indeed the universe is extremely uniform," said James Condon, the astronomer leading the survey. "If you got plucked down at a random spot in the universe you'd find about the same number of galaxies that you would anywhere else... There are no special places in the universe."

The results, confirmed in the discovery of nearly a million new objects across the universe, suggest that life is no more likely in our solar system than anywhere else.

"It's equally likely everywhere," said Mr. Condon, a scientist at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. "To the extent that there are say 100 bil-

lion galaxies out there and each galaxy has 100 billion stars, there's a lot of places where life might be forming."

This exciting conclusion comes from surveying radio waves that have travelled as long as 15 billion years before reaching earth from galaxies born soon after the big bang birth of the universe. Although condensation's radio map of the heavens does not dazzle with the myriad of individual stars gracing the famous Palomar sky survey of the 1950s, it gives scientists a chance to study much further away and earlier in time than optical telescopes because everything, from the earth's atmosphere to matter in space, blocks what can be seen.

Radio astronomy dates back only to the early 1930s when scientists began to investigate interference in radio telephone communications across the Atlantic. They discovered that distant galaxies were generating radio energy, which, after travelling at the speed of light — 300,000 km per second — would reach earth as long as billions of years later.

Today, a new generation of sophisticated amplifiers to boost weak signals millions and even billions of times, combined with massive computing power, are giving clearer pictures of

the distant universe than ever before possible.

On the desolate Plains of San Agustin, home to the very large array (VLA) radio telescope, the 27 round antennas, each weighing 230 tonnes and 25-meters wide, are eerily quiet, moving only occasionally to compensate for the orbit of the earth or to focus on a new area of the heavens.

At the same time, computers are processing a cacophony of radio data, plotting out what scientists expect will be a total of two million new objects across the universe by the time the VLA sky survey is finished in August.

"You do get that sense of wonder that here you are seeing the whole universe coming up on your screen for the first time," Mr. Condon said. "The radio waves that we see now that make those little dots on the screen were emitted before the earth and the sun were even formed."

Massive computing power at the VLA's administrative base in Socorro, New Mexico, has also enabled astronomers to link ten radio telescopes across the United States from Hawaii in the U.S. Virgin Islands, giving a resolution equal to a single instrument 8,000 km wide.

The computer, run by just a few staffers, monitors the

very long baseline array (VLBA) telescopes and ultimately boils down the data to a single digital cassette tape that astronomers can pop into a special player in their offices — often weeks or months after the observation.

"Radio astronomy doesn't provide the instant gratification of optical astronomy because you have to process the data you have to run it through a computer," said David Finley, spokesman for the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, which runs the both government-funded VLA and VLBA radio telescopes.

The space-age cartographers preparing the VLA sky survey say they hope amateurs will also study their maps posted on the Internet at <http://info.Aoc.Nrao.Edu/>, perhaps to challenge conventional astronomical wisdom.

"In the analysis of this you're going to uncover some surprises," said Rick Perley, an astronomer who has worked on the sky survey. "The rare objects often give you the most insight to phenomena... But it will take years of research to study the data and work by hundreds or thousands of people."

Syria questions American role

(Continued from page 1)

women and children internationally, said the Israeli operation — in which more than 200 Lebanese died, mainly civilians — was not an act of self-defence.

"It was not an unavoidable tragedy. I prefer to call it a crime," Vivian Stromberg, executive director of Madra and leader of the 10-member mission, told Reuters, after visiting victims of the bombing at a hospital in Sidon.

"We came to eyewitness and tell the true story back in the United States," she said.

"What happened... was presented to us as an act of self-defence by Israel which is already an aggressor and

already an international outlaw," said June Jordan, an activist and writer.

The Madra team has visited hospitals, schools and refugee centres during their three-day tour and have distributed \$10,000 worth of blankets and medicine. They also interviewed wounded victims and relatives of the dead and inspected damaged houses.

Participants also said they visited Cana.

At Sidon's Hammoud hospital, the delegates saw Cana survivor Lina Taqi, a six-year-old girl half-paralysed because shrapnel was embedded in the left side of her brain.

Agnelli launches new EU drive

(Continued from page 1)

ported Tuesday that a furious U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher broke off all contact with French foreign Minister Herve de Charette's parallel shuttle diplomacy to end the artillery duels between Hizbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces.

U.S. officials quoted by the paper said Mr. Christopher felt Mr. De Charette was undermining his efforts to ending the flare-up.

On Saturday Iranian state radio hailed France's "forceful return" to Middle East politics and its increasing involvement in mediation efforts in the region.

"France has found an appropriate place in the pub-

lic opinion of the region thanks to the role that Paris, more than any other government, played in ending the conflict in Lebanon," stressed the radio commentator.

"France's role during the conflict in Lebanon as well as in the border conflict between Yemen and Eritrea has changed the balance of power in the region, said Iranian radio.

"This active French role will serve to limit the U.S. role in the region and constitutes a serious obstacle in U.S. influence," it said, predicting the United States "will find it difficult to get round the French obstacle."

Sudan air crash kills 53

(Continued from page 1)

since the sandstorm blanketed Khartoum airport, officials said, insisting on anonymity. They had no explanation for an earlier, incorrect report that the crash was 325

kilometres northwest of Khartoum.

Many of the dead were students from Bahr Al Ghazal University in southern Sudan, the officials said.

JORDAN TIMES
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Middle East nations plead for technical assistance

MIDRAND, South Africa (AFP) — Several Middle East and North African countries urged the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Friday to grant technical and industrial assistance to developing countries.

UNCTAD, founded 32 years ago to promote international trade and development for the world's poorest countries, has recently faced pressure from the United States, Britain and other donor countries to scale down its operations.

Officials from two rival Middle East nations, Libya and Israel, were united Friday in stressing the U.N. body's importance in providing technical assistance to developing nations.

Israel's ambassador to Geneva, Neville Yosef Landan, said UNCTAD has provided "vital" international technical assistance in the past, which has resulted in new and unprecedented bilateral and multilateral training and research programmes between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Libyan Trade Minister Abdul Karim Harbaoui, said that despite world trade initiatives, developing economies could not improve "in a real way" without constant dia-

logue with richer nations.

Since the conference began last Saturday, several Western nations, including the United States and Britain, have called for serious reforms and programme cuts to the U.N. body.

Melinda Kimble, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state, announced the country will soon pay its \$311 million 1995 membership fees to UNCTAD's parent, the U.N., but added that UNCTAD must find a new focus and become "streamlined".

Earlier in the week, Iranian Commerce Minister Yahya Ale Ishagh called UNCTAD "the most relevant" body of the U.N. dealing with development, trade and technology.

Mr. Ishagh said UNCTAD should try to increase trade between the northern and southern hemispheres, adding that "the use of trade and economic lever to exert pressure and to seek political motives is a new and harmful phenomenon in world trade."

Friday, Lebanon's ambassador to South Africa, Charbel Stephan, praised the role of international trade in rebuilding his country's communications and economic infrastructure.

Mr. Ishagh said UNCTAD should try to increase trade between the northern and southern hemispheres, adding that "the use of trade and economic lever to exert pressure and to seek political motives is a new and harmful phenomenon in world trade."

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U.S. economic figures boost Clinton's election hopes

WASHINGTON (R) — A series of excellent U.S. economic figures have considerably boosted President Bill Clinton's chances of winning reelection, in November.

They spoke after the Commerce Department reported U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) growing at a robust 2.8 per cent annual rate in the first quarter, well above Wall Street expectations.

Additionally, the Labour Department reported Tuesday that a one per cent jump in first quarter wages and salaries represented the largest gain since the second quarter of 1991.

A growing sense of economic wellbeing may be contributing to Mr. Clinton's current solid standing in opinion polls, where he leads

Bob Dole, his prospective Republican presidential challenger, by more than 20 percentage points.

"These figures are without doubt good news for the president," said Al Tufcharber, a pollster and political scientist at the University of Cincinnati.

"The economy is the number one factor in a presidential election, especially when the incumbent is running for a second term," he said.

"Clinton is certainly the favourite to win. If the economy roars, with GDP growth hitting three per cent in the next quarter, he will become the prohibitive favourite," said Mr. Tufcharber.

The White House did not hide its pleasure at the economic growth figures. Commerce Secretary Mickey

Kantor claimed credit for "good economic decisions, such as the president's decisive action on the budget deficit and his determination to open foreign markets to our goods."

Faced with a healthy economy, there is little Mr. Dole can do to impede Mr. Clinton's momentum, said Mark Rozell, a political scientist with the University of Virginia.

"When the economy is good, public anger, subsidies and the Republican anti-government message just doesn't resound as well," he said.

"When people feel the economy is going well and their personal prospects are good, the incumbent wins," he said.

Mr. Dole has been arguing in recent days that the economy is not as healthy as all that, and would have been

much better had Mr. Clinton not raised taxes to his 1993 budget.

He is relying heavily on a report by the conservative Heritage Foundation which tried to project what economic performance would have been had taxes not been raised in 1993.

Authors Scott Hodge and Grover Hermann arrived at figures saying the economy would have grown by an additional \$66 billion in 1995 alone. They argue that wages were reduced by \$112 billion as a result of that budget.

"People are right to feel they should be better off today than they are. The 1993 tax increase deprived them of a higher standard of living by cutting the economy's growth," said Mr. Hermann.

Allan Lichtman, a political scientist at the American University, said the biggest

danger to Mr. Clinton now were a major foreign affairs disaster or a startling new personal scandal. Otherwise, the president's prospects looked good.

"When the economy is good, it takes something really big, almost catastrophic, to defeat the incumbent," he said.

Some analysts say merely looking at cold statistics does not capture widespread economic anxieties about corporate downsizing. Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan tried to exploit such fears in his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, but was soundly defeated by Mr. Dole.

Such sentiments may in fact contribute to resentment against big business rather than big government, helping the Democrats rather than the Republicans.

Lebanese firms reject graded government pay raise

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese companies Friday rejected a graded private sector pay increase announced by the government and said it would aggravate unemployment.

"The country's drastic economic crisis makes us categorically reject the principle of a pay increase, which would increase trade deficit, inflation and unemployment," said a statement issued by representatives of Lebanon's commercial, industrial and financial sectors after an emergency meeting.

The pay increase, which included a 20 per cent raise on the 250,000 Lebanese pounds monthly minimum wage, followed demands by the General Labour Confederation (GLC) for a 100 per cent increase in the minimum wage and a 76

per cent increase in other wages.

The government's decision, backdated to Jan. 1, 1996, gave a 20 per cent increase for wages up to 250,000 pounds, 10 per cent on the next 500,000 pounds and five per cent above 800,000 pounds.

"The economic crisis denounces the government's interference in wage grades above the minimum wage level and the return to the retroactive policy which makes inflation inevitable," the statement said.

The employers demanded the "immediate drawing of an economic-social policy before resorting to any increases which could result in dangerous consequences on the whole economy."

JORDAN WELCOMES SPAARBELEG

A group of top achievers from the investment company "SPAARBELEG" in Holland arrived in Jordan last Tuesday. During their stay, the members of the group have visited Jordan's major touristic sites, as well as having enjoyed many special functions ranging from a historic train ride through the suburbs of Amman to camping in the magical desert of Wadi Rum.

Welcome to Jordan, Spaarbeleg!

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TULIQ
APROV
DEGUBB
LOWLAF



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: IN A (Answers tomorrow)
Saturdays Jumbles: FOIST PARKA DISMAL PICHIC
Answer: This is sure to give you the blues — A PINK SLIP

France plans deep cuts in 1997 budget

PARIS (R) — The French government wants to cut spending by "several tens of billions of francs" in 1997 to reduce public deficit and qualify for European monetary union (EMU), a senior government source has said.

The source said Prime Minister Alain Juppe was determined to conduct a "dracanian" policy over four to five years and said that there were no taboo spending items.

The Le Monde newspaper said Thursday that Mr. Juppe was seeking 60 billion francs (\$12 billion) in spending cuts in the 1997 budget.

The communist daily l'Hu-manite said in its Friday edition the cuts could be between 60 and 100 billion francs.

On Thursday morning, Mr. Juppe chaired a cabinet meeting to "make the point that the reduction of public spending should be, for each mem-

ber of the government, an essential political priority, in line with the objectives laid down by the president of the republic."

Mr. Juppe said reduction of public spending was the only way to achieve a lowering of taxes and create conditions for economic activity and creation of jobs.

President Jacques Chirac said last week he expected tax cuts could take place in about two years after continued austerity and spending cuts.

The prime minister would send a mandate to each minister giving them a margin to find spending cuts. But for the "important budgets, Alain Juppe will himself chair the budget conferences with (finance minister) Jean Arthuis and (budget minister) Alain Lamassouze," the government source said.

Parliament would be involved in these

preparations from May 14 when the government will for the first time hold a preliminary debate on the budget.

The government aims to cut its budget deficit to 247.9 billion francs in 1997 from 287.8 billion in 1996. This in line with a policy to bring the deficit below three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1997.

The three per cent level is one of the conditions set down in the Maastricht treaty for countries to join European monetary union (EMU) and the single currency from 1999.

Job levels in public services will not be spared from the new cuts and the government source said it planned to keep vacant some places opened up by retirement. It is counting on cutting 65,000 jobs per year in this way.

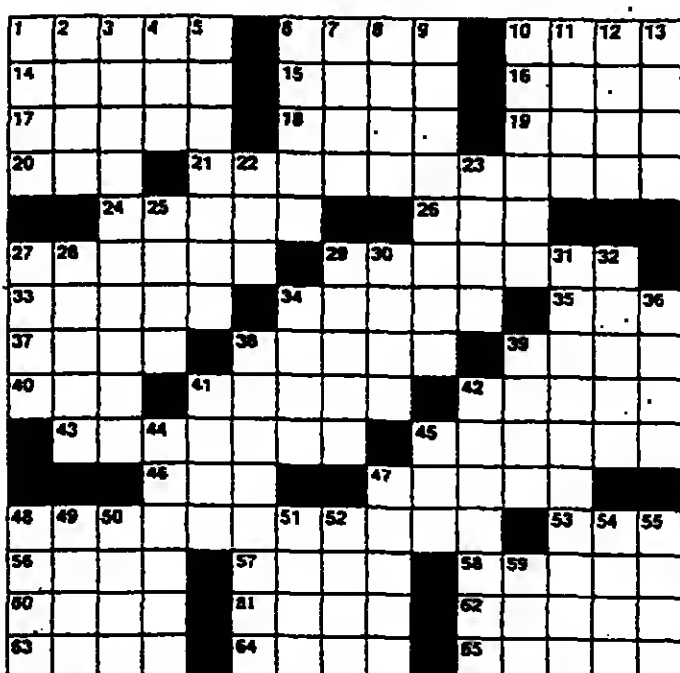
THE Daily Crossword by Robert Zimmerman

ACROSS

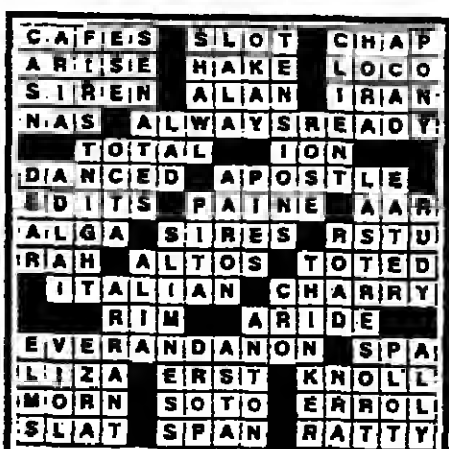
- 1 Snapshot subject
- 6 Boast
- 10 Regina's prov.
- 14 Far from ornate
- 15 Occupation
- 16 — homol
- 17 Bndal path
- 18 Auto pioneer
- 19 Resembling wings
- 20 "Rob —"
- 21 Fiscal fuel?
- 24 Got a glimpse
- 26 Native American
- 27 Rapid speech
- 29 Procession
- 33 Polonius' hiding place
- 34 Walk-on part
- 35 Ring official, briefly
- 37 Era
- 38 Fountain supplies
- 39 Remove the and
- 40 Street in Paris
- 41 Contested heights
- 42 Sgt. York
- 43 Everlasting
- 45 Gambled
- 46 — Cruces, NM
- 47 Council of —
- 48 A fortune in the Indge?
- 53 Sleep phenomenon
- 56 Olympic event
- 57 Agreement
- 58 Raccoon kin
- 60 Maple genus
- 61 Wickedness
- 62 Like sheep
- 63 Part of milk
- 64 Disposes of
- 65 Grapemoths

DOWN

- 1 Trade blows
- 2 Muse of history
- 3 Address worth working for
- 4 Zlich
- 5 Adversaries
- 6 Feichairad



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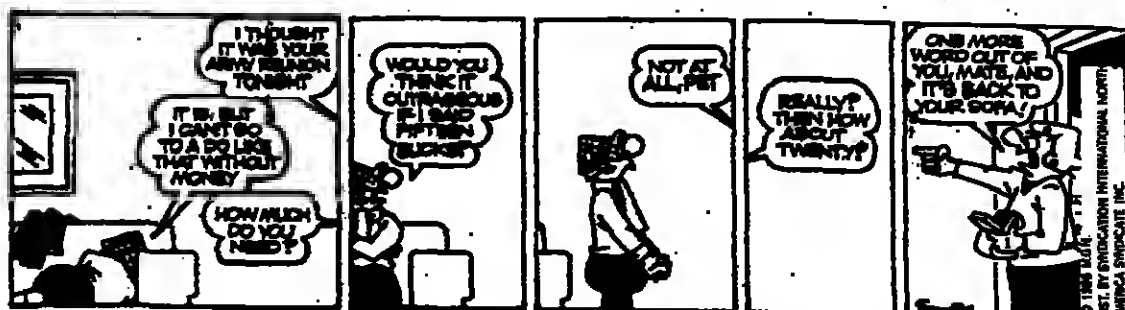
- 7 Imitate
- 8 Warhol or Rooney
- 9 Shrugs, e.g.
- 10 Shipborne builder
- 11 Rights defender letters
- 12 Duelist's memento
- 13 Composer Jerome
- 22 — the ramparts...
- 23 — von Bismarck
- 25 School orgs.
- 27 Early TV host
- 28 Contend
- 29 Kiel, for one
- 30 Portent
- 31 Vehicle for VIPs?
- 32 Creepy
- 34 Soft drink
- 36 Ward (off)
- 38 Think over
- 39 Blueprint
- 41 Feather weight, perhaps

- 42 City on the Sarthe
- 44 Queen of detectives
- 45 Money player
- 47 Money drawers
- 48 Talon
- 49 That hurts!
- 50 Molding
- 51 Son of Jacob
- 52 Prepared a table
- 54 Lab burner
- 55 Architect — Van Der Rohe
- 59 Eggs

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may find yourself at odds today with the your mate and loved ones, however, take it easy, and don't run off on a tangent. Later tonight seek the advice of a knowledgeable individual concerning some new career activities.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may find it difficult today to get a stubborn fellow associate to go along with an idea you have, so wait a better day for this. Later this evening you can discover the solution to some difficult situation you find yourself in.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may find it difficult today to get everything going your way in the morning. Later, you have to deal with a stubborn fellow associate, so keep digging in and all of your efforts will be rewarded.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Even if your loved one is in poor humour today, smile and be cheerful. You should not tackle any career activities which could make you grumpy and making those around you very difficult at this time.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Conditions at your residence may be a bit difficult today, but take this in your stride and show you appreciate the support and kindness by your loved ones. Later tonight, do something special for your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You may find it hard to live up to your beliefs today, however, try your best and it will be good enough. Later tonight, is a good time to acquire some data or information which you need for a new project.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may feel down hearted in the morning today and you want to be forceful with others to gain your way, however, use tact instead and you will be successful in the eyes of those knowledgeable bigwigs.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have the desire to lose your temper with everyone today, but control yourself and everything will turn out fine. Do something constructive later this evening on some career activities which need your attention.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get busy today at other things and you forget a secret misgiving which is annoying. Friends will not be responsive to suggestions which you make at this time, so try again at some more appropriate period.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Avoid any acquaintance who could be quite demanding today and solve any difficulties you have with the assistance of some knowledgeable individual. You should complete dull career activities quickly later this evening.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Stay at home in the morning today, or you could encounter criticism in the outside world, whether merited or not. Later tonight you should make the effort to go out on the town with your loved ones for some fun.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This morning is not a good time for getting into new outlets, and later tonight is best spent at home with your loved ones. Rest this evening for in the days ahead you could encounter some unexpected obstacles.

Birthstone of May: Emerald
Citrine

Jewish group, Swiss banks agree holocaust fund plan

NEW YORK (R) — Swiss bankers and Jewish leaders have signed an agreement setting up an independent commission to find out if unclaimed millions of dollars in Swiss banks belong to holocaust victims.

The two-page agreement calls for a six member commission — three chosen by the bankers and three by Jewish groups led by the World Jewish Congress (WJC) — to investigate the claims on a case by case basis.

The agreement was signed by Georg Krayer, head of the Swiss Bankers Association, and WJC President Edgar Bronfman at the Seagrams building here. Mr. Bronfman is chairman of Seagrams, the international wine and spirits firm.

The agreement, in a radical departure from traditional Swiss banking practice, allows an independent group of auditors appointed by the commission unrestricted access to Swiss bank accounts.

The agreement also calls for the commission to cooperate with the Swiss government to determine whether Swiss banks or other financial institutions still have in their accounts unreported assets or unreturned property looted by the Nazis.

The agreement ends a battle that began last September when the WJC sought to determine the extent of unclaimed assets in Swiss banks belonging to holocaust victims and assets looted from them by the Nazis.

Kuwait refinery boosts export facilities with \$100m project

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) is to go ahead with a project worth more than \$100 million to boost export facilities at the Gulf state's largest refinery, KNPC said Sunday.

The project has been approved and a new oil pier will be built for Mina Al Ahmadi, Sami Al Rashid, KNPC executive assistant managing director of planning and finance told AFP.

KNPC refines about 839,000 barrels a day (bpd) of oil, with the fast-growing Asian economies a major market for its refined products and liquid petroleum gas (LPG).

Mina Al Ahmadi, the largest of KNPC's three refineries, has a capacity of about 425,000 bpd of oil, with most of its production exported through the two piers now in operation.

The project will involve renovating the north pier and constructing a replacement for the ageing south pier, which was originally built in the 1940s.

The work will also entail temporary repairs on the south pier so that it can continue to act as an export terminal until the replacement becomes operational.

Mr. Al Rashid said KNPC would first award an engineering design contract, for which tenders will be issued in a few months time. This would be followed by the construction contract award.

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, which is the holding company for KNPC and all Kuwait's oil-related companies, gave its approval for the project at the end of last month, Mr. Al Rashid said.

KNPC has two other refineries, Mina Abdullah with capacity of 255,000 bpd and Shuaiba with current capacity of 155,000 bpd.

All three refineries were damaged during the Iraqi invasion between August 1990 and February 1991.

Only Shuaiba has yet to be restored to its pre-invasion capacity of 195,000 bpd, but repairs are now being carried out and are due to be completed in 1997.

DAILY BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Net profit of Rafia Industrial Company plunges by 94 per cent due to competition, high raw material prices

☆☆ RAFIA INDUSTRIAL Company (RIC) saw its net profit plunge by 94 per cent last year from JD 300,000 in 1994 to JD 18,000 in 1995. Board Chairman Saleh Al Armouti cited marketing difficulty, high raw materials prices and low sale prices due to stiff competition as factors for what he described as "humble profit."

"Jordan is not a large market for this (plastic) industry and there is no 'breathing space' for the seven local companies in this market except the tender of the Ministry of Supply which some companies win at a loss," Dr. Armouti said. "The Iraqi market unstable in light of feverish competition."

Mr. Armouti said that the RIC sold 19.2 million metres of plastic bags last year and earned JD 2.4 million from these sales but, he added, the net profit was highly affected by costs rising by nearly 50 per cent in addition to marketing difficulties and the pressure to lower prices.

The chairman told the general assembly that RIC had contracted an Austrian company to supply a new production line to produce plastic threads at a cost of JD 1.5 million. Noting that trial production is expected to begin in May 1996, Mr. Armouti predicted that this new line would bring RIC a JD 20,000 profit in the first year and JD 300,000 in the second year of operations.

According to the annual report, the shareholders' equity increased to JD 2.29 million and fixed assets were valued at JD 1.37 million at the end of 1995 (al Aswaaq + Al Ra'i).

Arab Investment and International Trade Company narrows losses and reduces indebtedness

☆☆ THE ARAB Investment and International Trade Company succeeded in narrowing losses and reducing indebtedness last year as the 1995 loss amounted to JD 25,000 compared to JD 157,000 in 1994 and the long-term debt totalled JD 436,000 instead of JD 500,000 at the end of 1994. Noting that there was no amount due and unpaid at the end of 1995, Board Chairman Abdul Malek Al Saeed told the general assembly that the company had enough liquidity to carry out its operations and to implement a contract to supply 1,500 tonnes of soap to Iraq without having to resort to large loans as in previous years. Mr. Saeed said that the company was able to purchase the raw materials at the right time to obtain competitive prices and reduce costs. He added that sales were increased by 11 per cent, despite rising competition, and costs were lowered and, as such, the company managed to improve net operational profit and to move towards generating profits compared to the results of previous years.

Mr. Saeed said that the company established a line to produce liquid detergents last year and he expected it to achieve excellent results with regard to the volume of investment.

He referred to the capital increase at the end of 1994 and highlighted that the infusion of fresh capital was behind the company's improved liquidity, its capability to execute the Iraqi contract and the setting up of the line for producing liquid detergents.

The chairman pointed out that the plan for 1996 include boosting sales and that studies on production, costs and volume of sales for the previous years have shown that "by securing the needed raw materials and continuing production without any stoppage could enable us to generate high profits." Mr. Saeed also revealed that the management of the company seeks to begin a plan to modernise the sanitary paper plant (al Aswaaq + al Dustour).

Riyadh seeks WTO admission in '97

GENEVA (R) — Saudi Arabia and its major trading partners are hopeful it can join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) next year, the Saudi commerce minister said Friday.

Osamah Bin Jaafar Bin Ibrahim Faqih also said the desert kingdom was seeking membership as a developing country granting it a special transition period, during which to conform to WTO rules in such areas as patent and copyright protection.

He spoke in an interview with Reuters after leading a Saudi delegation in the first round of talks on the world's largest oil exporter entering the 120-member trade watchdog.

Four of the six Gulf Cooperation Council members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) are already WTO members, while Oman last week formally applied for membership.

Saudi Arabia applied in July 1993 to the WTO's predecessor body, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). But a GATT working party set up to study the request made no progress.

Asked the chances of Riyadh being admitted in 1997, Mr. Faqih told Reuters: "I hope so. I don't think it is unrealistic."

"This hope was shared by some countries, especially our major partners. We don't really anticipate major obstacles," he added.

Mr. Faqih said: "We are one of the strong believers in free trade and open markets... Our trade regime is WTO compliant and there are very little things here and there that require clarification and explanation."

John Weekes, Canada's trade ambassador who chairs the WTO working party studying the Saudi application, told Reuters: "We got the process off to a very good start, but it takes time to negotiate an accession."

"Even in the best case scenario, one couldn't envisage finishing until sometime next year," he added.

The Saudi minister, who led a delegation of 21 officials, also held bilateral talks with Geneva trade envoys with partners including the United States, European Union and Japan.

Mr. Faqih said bilateral contacts had enabled the Saudi team to assess "requirements of the next phase."

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK OFFER - AMMAN - SAMARIYAH											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607170											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 04/05/1996											
PRICE	12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / K	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
250.000	202.000	ARAB BANK	12.4	1.88	3	60	12840	227.50	226.80	1.00	
6.890	6.180	JOR. INDUSTRIAL BK.	13.7	3.10	14	8160	41380	4.82	4.82	-	
2.900	2.350	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	3.9	0.00	300	300	2.90	2.90	2.90	-	
0.300	0.350	THE HOUSING BK.	12.0	0.00	3	320	1440	4.50	4.50	-	
3.190	2.600	JOR. KOWATY BANK	20.1	0.00	5	473	1314	2.80	2.78	-0.02	
1.840	1.540	JOR. KOWATY BANK	9.0	0.00	2	31844	55572	1.00	1.00	-0.04	
4.180	3.300	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	20.0	0.00	31	8775	27783	6.11	6.19	-0.08	
4.450	3.300	JOR. INV. & DEV. BANK	19.4	0.00	1	1000	3840	3.88	3.88	-	
4.240	2.830	RETAIL BANK (SEKEM)	1.6	0.00	3	1800	4808	2.82	2.82	-	
1.390	1.320	ARAB BANK	9	0.00	27	49700	26718	0.98	0.98	-0.02	
5.950	4.600	ARAB BANKING CO.	25.3	0.00	1	150	725	4.98	4.90	-0.08	
1.930	1.070	PRINCE ALI BANK	9	0.00	5	1200	1464	1.39	1.39	-0.01	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 181.14 CHNG: -0.38 141 121776 179145											
3.380	3.040	JORDAN INSURANCE	13.7	3.33	1	300	300	3.04	3.10	-0.06	
3.910	3.450	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.9	5.18	1	300	480	3.48	3.45	-	
2.680	2.300	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.9	7.92	1	300	210	2.20	2.10	-0.10	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 123.96 CHNG: +0.22 3 400 1010											
1.950	1.530	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.8	7.06	1	100	170	1.79	1.70	-0.09	
3.050	2.310	PHILIPPINE LINES	5.6	7.27	4	1300	3880	2.74	2.75	-0.01	
3.820	1.190	RAIL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	20	6480	9739	1.61	1.61	-	
1.160	1.900	REAL ESTATE INV.	22.0	3.21	4	2000	1985	1.04	0.99	-0.05	
2.610	1.780	MED. EAST HOTELS	92.6	0.00	1	100	215	2.11	2.15	-0.04	
1.560	1.200	ARAB HOTEL DEV. CO.	19.7	0.00	11	8900	18024	3.28	3.22	-0.06	
1.330	1.000	ARAB HOTEL DEV. CO.	9	0.00	12	250	961	1.00	1.00	-	
1.610	1.000	ZAKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	7	5850	5707	1.01	1.01	-	
2.600	1.970	UNIFED CO.	11.1	4.76	6	1247	2585	2.00	2.10	-0.10	
1.200	1.020	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	27	16332	17094	1.01	1.06	-0.05	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.74 CHNG: -0.65 82 33229 60362											
1.630	1.140	APPAREL	72.0	0.00	3	1200	1500	1.25	1.26	-	
4.120	3.390	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.4	2.80	5	1408	19358	3.71	3.37	-0.34	
2.780	2.700	JOR. FERTILIZER INDUS.	33.6	0.00	6	1248	8418	3.15	3.11	-0.04	
6.030	4.750	ARAB FERTILIZER CO.	18.2	3.74	5	1750	9433	5.55	5.38	-0.20	
11.150	8.900	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	13.7	8.89	30	2428	24599	10.13	10.19	-0.06	
1.820	1.400	WOODEN INDUSTRIES	17.1	3.77	6	1380	1103	1.82	1.80	-0.02	
5.870	3.780	ARAB PHARM. INDUS.	9	0.00	65	17280	70248	4.00	4.09	-0.09	
1.590	1.700	JOR. CEMENT IND.	8.0	0.00	3	400	2880	6.40	6.40	-	
8.640	6.400	OAR ALUMINA IND. CO.	15.1	3.64	3	680	3878	6.60	6.50	-0.10	
6.700	6.050	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.5	7.43	18	4300	24249	3.32	3.39	-0.07	
1.740	1.450	HYDROELECTRIC & POWER	8.5	0.00	31	27000	18125	0.58	0.57	-0.01	
1.120	1.280	JOR. PAPER CO.	10.7	7.30	1	1200	1233	1.36	1.37	-0.01	
1.110	1.400	NATIONAL RICE IND.	7	7.41	2	400	542	1.40	1.38	-0.02	
1.490	1.880	NATIONAL RICE	13.3	5.67	13	12350	11005	0.89	0.80	-0.09	
2.890	1.080	INTERNATIONAL PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	37	16150	13639	1.29	1.35	-0.06	
1.340	1.830	JOR. ROPEWORK INDUS.	9	0.00	10	7207	7136	0.99	1.00	-0.01	
8.900	2.480	WASTE WATER TREATMENT	13.8	5.93	5	950	3124	3.20	3.34	-0.14	
1.940	1.950	JOR. SILICO-IND.	9	0.00	1	500	300	1.01	1.00	-0.01	
3.580	1.080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	6.2	8.23	6	4450	5652	1.26	1.27	-0.01	
3.650	2.440	UNIV. MODERN INDUS.	7	7.07	3	22800	56992	2.49	2.49	-	
3.480	1.380	JOR. INV. RESEARCHERS	2.6	0.00	48	41000	71746	1.70	1.78	-0.08	
2.100	1.000	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	32.1	0.00	34	10900	12382	1.17	1.10	-0.07	
2.610	1.980	W. & A. WAREHOUSE	9	0.00	28	9123	21274	2.94	3.31	-0.37	
1.670	1.180	ISRA. TOBACCO	9	0.00	58	31480	41993	1.33	1.38	-0.05	
2.660	1.180	UNION CR. & VNG.	24.5	0.00	24	20400	28389	1.42	1.44	-0.02	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.83 CHNG: -2.00 468 242062 462394											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 149.21 CHNG: -1.06 893 403888 703708											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 04/05/1996											
PRICE	12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / K	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
0.940	0.700	JOR. TRADE FAC.	20.0	0.00	5	3000	2270	0.75	0.75	-	
1.000	0.760	UNION INV. CO.	88.8	0.00	14	24700	8596	0.80	0.83	-0.04	
1.590	0.620	ARAB YR. INVEST.	38	0.00	38	49350	41370	0.80	0.84	-0.04	
1.780	0.340	JOR. IND. INVEST. VNGO	1	0.00	200	98	108	0.47	0.49	-0.02	
1.240	0.630	ARAB FOOD & WED.	3	0.00	2	113	78	0.69	0.69	-	
2.120	1.380	WATL. COGNAC	9	0.00	9	4480	7192	1.88	1.63	-0.25	
0.920	0.820	ARAB INTEL. INV. IND.	9	0.00	2	800	504	0.64	0.63	-0.01	
1.370	0.600	WATL. COGNAC	9	0.00	3	3331	994	0.85	0.85	-	
1.100	0.700	WATL. COGNAC	9	0.00	37	47980	36070	0.81	0.83	-0.02	
1.250	0.800	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	14	9400	8118	0.98	0.97	-0.01	
1.070	0.600	ARAB ELECT. IND.	9	0.00	3	850	342	0.63	0.65	-0.02	
1.030	0.670	HYDROELECTRIC & POWER	9	0.00	2	300	328	0.71	0.71	-	
1.100	0.800	WATL. COGNAC	9	0.00	15	18400	19048	1.26	1.37	-0.11	
1.030	0.680	WATL. COGNAC	9	0.00	7	8880	1201	0.71	0.71	-	
0.970	0.770	IND. INV.	21.7	0.00	8	3198	1404	0.63	0.64	-0.01	
1.120	0.880	IND. INV.	9	0.00	30	11600	11136	0.98	0.98	-	
1.690	0.700	WATL. COGNAC	20.7	0.00	18	17200	13399	0.77	0.77	-	
GRAND TOTAL 198 182288 147930											

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FIFA rejects proposal for co-hosting of World Cup

PARIS (AFP) — A proposal that South Korea and Japan should co-host the 2002 World Cup is almost certain to be rejected by FIFA President Joao Havelange.

Although the 80-year-old president is not expected to formally reply to the co-hosting plan put forward by European members until next week, a FIFA spokesman said Friday that nothing had changed.

"As the president has already stated, co-hosting is against the rules of FIFA," said the spokesman.

And Havelange is expected to try and block any attempt to try and have the rules changed before the June 1 vote in Zurich on the site of the 2002 Cup.

Japan, whose bid is strongly supported by Havelange, is firmly opposed to co-hosting.

"The first clause of the FIFA rules provides that the

World Cup is hosted by one country. This clause is considered as a golden rule. The co-hosting will never happen," said Ken Naganuma, president of the Japanese Football Association, recently.

South Korea is also not keen on having to share the prize of being the first Asian country to host the cup, but Prime Minister Lee Soo-Sung, said on Friday that if most FIFA members wanted co-hosting then his country would accept the idea.

The co-hosting suggestion has been put forward because of the bitter battle between the two countries as they try to convince the 21-man FIFA executive committee to award them the tournament.

Last month, all eight European members of the FIFA executive committee joined the growing list and wrote to Havelange calling for co-hosting.

"It is increasingly obvious that the fear of losing (the World Cup 2002 bid) has become more important than the desire to win. The two parties have displayed a level of agitation which is very disturbing. It is clear that the federation, and indeed the nation, which loses the bid will suffer a devastating blow," wrote the Europeans.

The Asian Federation is also concerned by the rivalry. "The campaigns have gone beyond the limit of normalcy," said Sultan Ahmad Shah, the Malaysian head of the Asian federation.

Even Premier Lee made reference to the battle when he warned on Friday that the bidding war should not damage the good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Seoul and Tokyo should try to avoid diplomatic trauma and conflict in their

campaign, he added.

Lee's stance on the possibility of co-hosting is expected to be conveyed to Tokyo next week by Kim Yoon-Hwan, head of the Korea-Japan Parliamentary Union and chairman of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP), Yonhap news agency said.

"Mr. Kim Yoon-Hwan plans to relay South Korea's intent to Japan and feel out Japan's response, when he pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto," said an NKP official.

But unless there is a dramatic about-turn from Japan, his appeal is likely to fall flat.

Seishiro Eto, who heads the group of Japanese parliamentarians promoting the Japanese bid, recently said: "We have agreed with Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto that there will be no co-hosting of the World Cup."

Indians win twice

SEATTLE (R) — After the Kingdome was declared safe on Friday, the Cleveland Indians finished winning the game that was suspended by Thursday's earthquake and then won another one for good measure.

The Indians, who were leading 6-3 in the seventh when the Kingdome was rocked by the quake, won it 6-4. The stadium shook for some 45 seconds and the game was suspended after 19 minutes.

Albert Belle hit a two-run homer and Orel Hershiser tossed 6 1/3 solid innings to put Cleveland ahead Thursday. Jose Mesa gave up a solo homer to Paul Sorrento in the ninth Friday but notched his 10th save.

In Friday's regularly scheduled game, Tony Pena hit a two-run homer and Julio Franco added a solo shot to lead Cleveland to a 5-2 victory over the Mariners.

The win was the fifth in a row for the Indians and their 17th victory in 20 games.

Charles Nagy (4-1) pitched 7 1/3 strong innings for the win, allowing two runs and seven hits. Jose Mesa tossed a scoreless ninth for his 11th save in as many opportunities.

Sterling Hitchcock (3-1) lost, surrendering four runs and seven hits in seven innings.

In Detroit, Ken Hill pitched a one-hitter, Juan Gonzalez homered and drove in four runs and Dean Palmer capped a five-run first with a three-run homer as the Texas Rangers ripped the Tigers 11-0.

Hill (4-2) did not walk a batter and struck out seven in getting the second one-hitter of his career. He allowed a one-out single to Bobby Higginson — the second batter of the game — and retired the final 26 Tigers.

"No question, it's my best game," Hill said. "It's the best you can get from me. I felt good from the beginning to the end."

In New York, Bernie Williams and Joe Girardi had RBI singles in the eighth inning as the New York Yankees blanked the Chicago White Sox 2-0 for their fifth straight win.

Mariano Rivera (3-0) picked up the win after two bittersweet innings of relief, extending his scoreless streak to 13 innings. Starter Dwight Gooden, still searching for his first win, posted his second strong outing. He allowed three hits with six walks and four strikeouts in six innings.

In Kansas City, Kevin Appier allowed three hits over seven innings and Keith Lockhart homered in the first inning as the Royals scored a 3-1 win over the Oakland Athletics.

Appier (3-3) allowed one run, struck out seven and walked four. Reliever Jeff Montgomery pitched the ninth for his seventh save, escaping a jam of his own making.

Jose Offerman scored on an error Geronimo Berroa in the second and the Royals added an insurance run on Craig Paquette's RBI single in the eighth.

In Baltimore, Scott Erickson tossed a four-hitter for his first complete game of the season and Brady Anderson continued his torrid hitting with two home runs and five RBIs as the Orioles beat the Milwaukee Brewers 8-2.



Exercise rider Jose Sanchez takes Kentucky Derby contender Skip Away for a run around the track at Churchill

Downs during a morning workout for the 122nd running of the Kentucky Derby May 3 (Reuters photo)

Buenos Aires touted as 'safe' option for 2004 Games

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentina on Friday began a public relations drive to host the 2004 Olympic games, promoting its relatively crime-free capital Buenos Aires as the "safe" option for the event.

"It's one of the biggest, safest cities in the world," Francisco Mayorga, the Argentine tourism secretary and former racing driver who is heading the capital's Olympic bid, told a news conference.

Security has been a major concern at all Olympics since Arab extremists killed 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Games. For this summer's Olympics in Atlanta there will even be U.S. biological and chemical warfare troops on standby.

Buenos Aires, a city of 12 million people, still has a surprisingly low level of street crime for a metropolis of its size. But it has suffered two major anti-Jewish bomb attacks in the past four years, in which over 100 people were killed. Police have still not tracked down any of the bombers.

Mayorga described the 1992 and 1994 attacks as isolated events "in a country without social or racial conflicts."

Eleven cities are candidates for the 2004 Games and the media has judged Athens, Rome and Cape Town the front-runners, ahead of Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, San Juan, Stockholm, Seville, St. Petersburg, Lille and Istanbul.

Buenos Aires, making its fifth bid for the Games to follow

this summer's Olympics in Atlanta and Sydney's Games in 2000, is counting on its image as a sports-loving country with an outstanding reputation for soccer, tennis and polo.

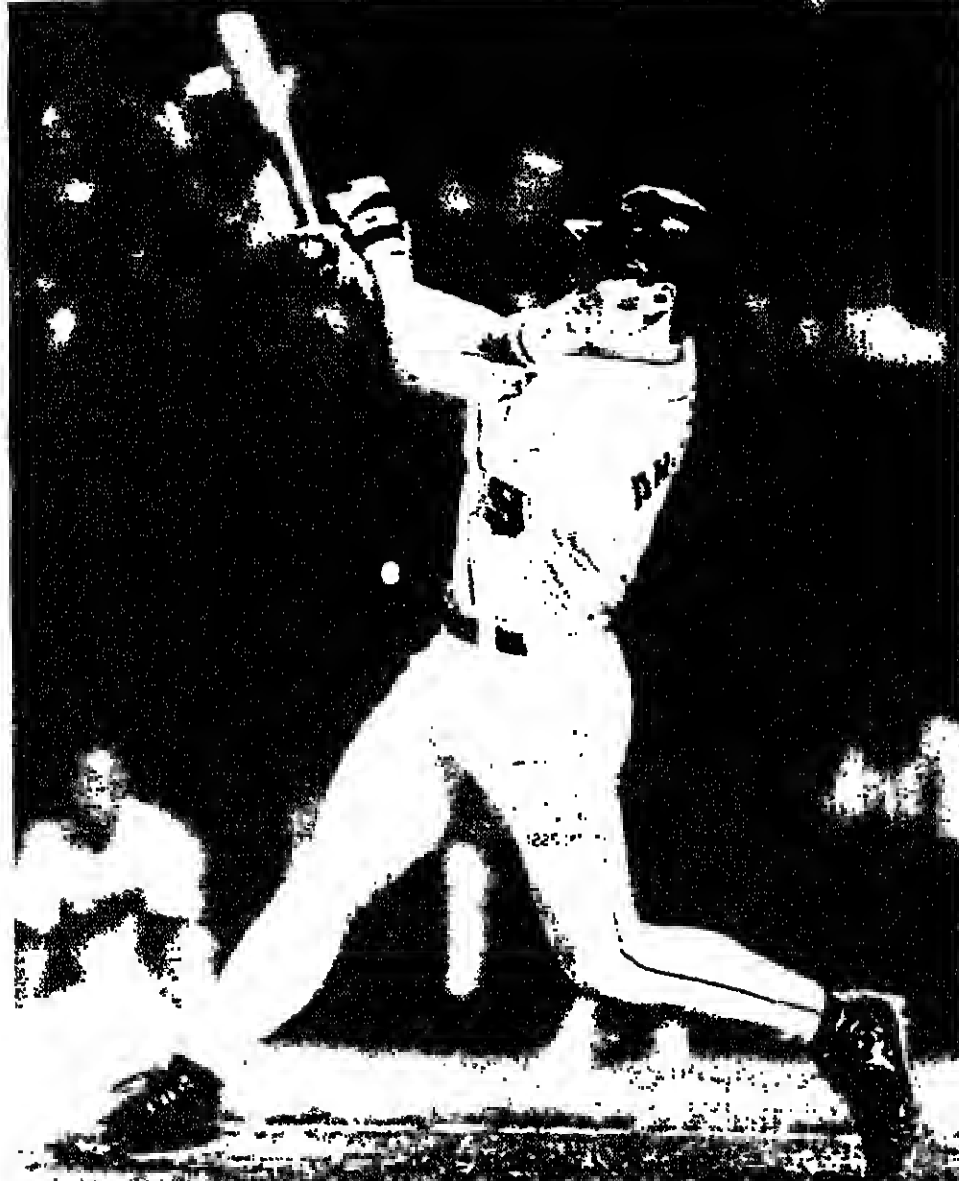
"It is a country that loves sports and a city that has a sporting vocation," Mayorga said, outlining plans to centre the games in nine square miles (24 square km) right at the heart of Buenos Aires.

The city already has a wide range of centrally-located sports centres on a broad band of reclaimed land on the river plate, including soccer clubs Boca and River Plate — site of the 1978 World Cup — a horse track, polo fields and plenty of tennis centres and indoor exhibition centres.

Only baseball, badminton and rowing would be held outside the city centre, said Col. Antonio Rodriguez, president of the Argentine Olympic Committee.

Argentina, whose bid is cherished by sports-fan president Carlos Menem, also holds up its performance as host of the 1995 Panamerican Games and its Olympic tradition going back more than a century to 1894, when it was one of 12 founder members of the first international Olympic committee.

"The aim is to ensure the athletes have the best place and conditions in which to compete," said Mayorga. "I don't want to belittle any of the competition ... but we are going to win."



Baltimore Orioles' Brady Anderson follows through on his home run swing off Milwaukee Brewers' Ricky Bones in the third inning of their game at Camden Yards May 3 (Reuters photo)

Maddux suffers surprise defeat

ATLANTA (R) — The incomparable Greg Maddux suffered one of the worst defeats of his career Friday when Benito Santiago hit a grand slam in a five-run ninth to give the Philadelphia Phillies a 6-3 win over the Atlanta Braves.

David Justice hit a solo homer in the bottom of the eighth to give the Braves a 2-1 lead. But the Phillies struck for five runs in the top of the ninth off Maddux (4-2), who allowed his first grand slam in 308 career games.

Santiago, who also hit a solo homer in the fifth inning, matched a career high with two RBIs.

"At that time, I just tried to hit a fly ball to the outfield for an RBI. I just wanted to score one run and be ahead in the ninth inning," said Santiago of his shot that sailed over the centerfield wall for his eighth homer.

The setback left Maddux (4-2) with as many losses as

he had all last season, when he went 19-2 and won his fourth straight Cy Young award.

Maddux allowed more than three earned runs for just the sixth time in his last 75 starts, going back to the 1993 all-star break.

"Give him credit, he was aggressive up there," Maddux said of Santiago. "He swung aggressive and I threw him a pitch he could hit."

Terry Mulholland (3-2) earned the victory, allowing two runs and nine hits over eight innings.

In Chicago, Sammy Sosa broke an 0-for-18 slump by hitting a three-run homer with two out in the bottom of the ninth to give the Cubs a dramatic 4-2 win over the New York Mets.

Mets rookie Paul Wilson (1-2) took a two-hitter and a 2-1 lead into the ninth and had registered his eighth and ninth strikeouts before intentionally walking Mark Grace to bring up the slumping

Sosa.

The strategy totally backfired when Sosa lined Wilson's first pitch into the left-field bleachers. "I had gotten (Sosa) on that pitch all day," Wilson said. "I'm not going to second-guess myself, I just got burned on one pitch."

Jaime Navarro (2-3) pitched his first complete game since last August for the win. In Pittsburgh, winning pitcher Chan Ho Park singled home the go-ahead run and the Los Angeles Dodgers blew open a tight game with eight runs in the ninth to rout the Pirates 10-1.

Park (3-1) gave up one run and five hits in five innings and combined with three relievers on the Dodgers' seventh win in 10 games. His two-out RBI single in the second snapped a 1-1 tie and was his first Major-League hit.

Los Angeles took a 3-1 lead into the ninth before sending 11 men to the plate.



Michael Chang

Chang rolls into Atlanta semifinals

ATLANTA (R) — Two-time defending champion Michael Chang moved closer to a title Three-Peat at the ATT Challenge Tennis Tournament by holding off unseeded Brazilian Fernando Meligeni on Friday to advance to the semifinals.

The top-seeded Chang roared back from a 1-5 second-set deficit on the Atlanta clay to beat Meligeni 6-1, 7-5.

Moroccan Karim Alami, ranked 78th but seeded sixth in a field bereft of top level players aside from Chang, reached his first career semifinal earlier Friday.

Alami earned a meeting with the fourth-ranked Chang by upsetting third-seeded Argentine Javier Fra-

na 2-6, 7-6, 6-2. Second seed Richey Reneberg narrowly averted upset when he came back from a break down in the third set to beat fellow American Bryan Shelton 7-6 (11-9), 3-6, 7-5.

"It was one of those matches when you look back you have no idea how you won it," said Reneberg.

"I thought he outplayed me in the second and third set and I was just lucky to win but I didn't deserve to win," admitted the second seed, who will face Nicklas Kulti in the semis after the Swede took a pair of tie-breaks from American Vince Spadca 7-0 and 7-3.

Chang wasted no time in jumping out to a 5-0 lead in

Armstrong extends Tour Dupont lead

RALEIGH, North Carolina (R) — Defending champion Lance Armstrong claimed his second stage win in less than 24 hours with a record time trial showing on Friday to extend his overall lead in the Tour Dupont cycling race.

The 24-year-old Texan captured the 11.5-kilometre Raleigh time trial — the second of Friday's two stages — in 12 minutes and 56.965 seconds for a winning margin of more than 23 seconds.

Armstrong was clocked at a blistering pace of 52.93 kph for the fastest time trial in the eight-year history of the Tour Dupont.

Tony Rominger of Switzerland, the reigning Tour of Italy champion, finished second in 13:20.030, with his teammate, Daniele Nardello of Italy, third in 13:29.059.

With his remarkable time trial performance, Armstrong extended the overall lead he grabbed by winning Thursday's second stage to 35 seconds over Rominger. Nardello, who finished fifth overall last year, is third, 44 seconds back.

"You have to rely on how you feel," said Armstrong, the 1993 world road champion who last month won the Fleche-Wallone race in Belgium. "I didn't feel super, but I think it tells me I'm in shape."

Earlier Friday, Marcel Wust of Germany, a triple stage winner in the 1995 Tour of Spain, broke from a large sprinting pack to win the 162-kilometre Emporia 162-kilometre road race by one metre in 4 hours 8 minutes 4.8 seconds.

Sven Teutenberg of Germany, who captured two stages in the 1994 Tour Dupont, was second in the day's first race. Glenn Magnusson of Sweden, who finished Thursday's stage second, was third Friday.

Armstrong, protected by teammates, finished the road race in the main field, all credited with the same time as the winner.

Rominger, one of the world's premier cyclists competing for the first time in the United States, said he was using this race to prepare for the sport's most prestigious event.

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The Goren Bridge was a 1994 Bids... (text continues with bridge-related commentary)

Win the king of diamonds, cash the queen and cross to the ace... (text continues with bridge-related commentary)

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Tim Gullikson dies at 44

WHEATON, Illinois (R) — Former tennis player Tim Gullikson, who coached Pete Sampras to the number one ranking in the world, died of brain cancer on Friday. He was 44.

Gullikson, who enjoyed most of his tennis success playing doubles with his identical twin brother, Tom, had been fighting the disease for more than a year.

"Today I lost a dear friend and coach," said Sampras, from his home in Tampa, Florida in a statement issued by the ATP Tour. "But we all lost a special person."

"My prayers are with his wife Rosemary and with his two children, Erik and Megan," The universally well-liked Gullikson made his last coaching appearance with Sampras at the 1995 Australian Open, which he left abruptly to return home after falling ill. He was subsequently diagnosed with brain cancer.

Sampras continued to battle through the draw to the final, playing a memorable quarter-final match with Jim Courier — a match that saw Sampras weep openly on the court during the fifth set when a fan called out for him to win it for Gullikson.

Despite his personal ordeal, Gullikson continued to counsel Sampras via telephone throughout the year.

Gullikson, affectionately known as 'Gully', was last seen publicly at Sampras's side when he unofficially coached Sampras during a dead rubber match at the Davis Cup semifinals between the United States and Sweden last September.

Tim made the trip to Las Vegas and provided a huge emotional lift to Sampras and brother Tom, the U.S. Davis Cup captain, merely by his presence at court.

Under Gullikson's tutelage Sampras blossomed into a multiple Wimbledon and U.S. Open winner and finished atop the ATP tour rankings for three consecutive years.

As a singles player, Gullikson's finest hour came at Wimbledon in 1979 when he upset John McEnroe in the round of 16 and went on to reach the quarter-finals, his best singles result in a Grand Slam tournament.

In all, he won four singles titles, but became a very popular figure on the international tennis circuit in the 1970s as the right-handed half of the Gullikson twins doubles team.

Gullikson won 10 of his 16 doubles titles with brother Tom and the pair also reached the finals at Wimbledon in 1983.

Mark of Esteem wins thrilling Guineas

NEWMARKET, England (AFP) — The Godolphin-owned Mark of Esteem won a thrilling English 2000 Guineas here on Saturday.

The winner, an 8/1 shot that Sheikh Mohammed controversially removed from trainer Hedy Cecil last year, just held off the 40/1 outsider Even Top by a short head in a photo finish with the 16/1 shot Bijou D'Inde in third.

Mark of Esteem, ridden by champion jockey Frankie Dettori, and trained by Saeed Bin Suroor, overtook Even Top two furlongs to go after Royal Applause had set the early pace.

Dettori seemed set for an easy victory until Philip Robinson summoned a last great effort out of Even Top, trained by Mark Tompkins, in the final furlong.

The two horses hit the line together with the Yorkshire challenger Bijou D'Inde, representing the 1994 winning

duo of trainer Mark Johnston and jockey Jason Weaver, a gallant third.

Alhaarth and Beauchamp King, the two leading favorites, never threatened. The latter sweated up heavily before the race while Alhaarth's pace-maker Masehaah was not able to give the favorite a lead and Alhaarth finished adrift in fourth.

The Sheikh's Godolphin operation took out its fourth consecutive classic.

Mark of Esteem's previous claim to fame was as the catalyst for the Cecil-Mohammed split.

The 10-time champion trainer entered the colt for the prestigious Royal Lodge Stakes at Ascot, but the colt was then mysteriously withdrawn.

Cecil claimed that Sheikh Mohammed had ordered the horse to be withdrawn because he wanted to take him back for the winter to Dubai.

Grobelaar, three others deny charges

WINCHESTER, England (AP) — Three Premier League players pleaded innocent Friday to corruption charges in English soccer's biggest match-fixing scandal in 30 years.

Bruce Grobelaar, John Fashanu and Hans Segers, along with Malaysian businessman Heng Lim, de-

nied the charges at a pre-trial hearing at Winchester crown court.

The judge ordered the four to stand trial starting Jan. 14.

The defendants are charged with conspiring together to give and accept gifts of money to influence the outcome of soccer games from between Feb. 1, 1991,

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Spain's Carlos Moya returns the ball of Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic during their quarter-final match at the Munich mens ATP

Becker moves closer to rematch with Muster

MUNICH (AFP) — Boris Becker and Thomas Muster moved a step closer towards a repeat of their epic Monte Carlo 1995 final as both advanced into the semi-finals of the Munich Open here on Friday.

Muster, the world number two, and Becker, this year's Australian Open champion, safely came through their quarter-final matches, although Muster needed three sets to see off his Australian opponent Mark Philippoussis.

Muster rallied, after losing his first love set since compatriot Horst Skoff beat him to love in the first round of the 1993 French Open, to beat Philippoussis 6-3, 0-6, 6-2 in

74 minutes. Becker, who had to ask for a wild card entry here as he was knocked out in the second round of Monte Carlo last week, and Muster played a five-set final in April, 1995, at Monte Carlo, where Muster claimed victory after coming from two sets down and saving two set points to deny Becker.

Muster, who has not lost on the surface since Kitzbuhel last August and took 12 titles on the "dirt" in 1995, beat Philippoussis for a 38th consecutive match victory on his favourite surface.

The Austrian lost the rapid-fire second set in just 17 minutes against world number 31 Philippoussis, but said: "Luckily, you need more than a big serve on clay."

"You have to be able to think and plan strategy in order to win. But in the second set, he served and played well."

Becker and Karbacher knew each other's games so well that it took tiebreakers to settle the score.

The second-seeded Becker romped through the first one, winning on a service winner.

In the second set, Becker romped through the first won, winning on a service winner.

Martinez, Sanchez in Hamburg final

HAMBURG (R) — Spaniards Conchita Martinez and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario moved towards a showdown in the final of the Hamburg Open women's clay-court tournament with crushing semifinal victories on Saturday.

Martinez cruised to a 6-1, 6-1 win over French fourth seed Mary Pierce while top seed Sanchez-Vicario had few problems in a 6-2, 6-0 victory over France's Julie Halard-Decugis.

Romania's 'golden oldies' await Euro 96

BUCHAREST (R) — Romania's "golden generation" of world class players are desperate to prove themselves as more than European champions also-rans and show their 1994 World Cup quarter-final place was no fluke.

Many of the veterans from U.S.A. 94, now in their mid-thirties, will have their last big chance to represent Romania at Euro 96. They are determined to go out as heroes.

Team manager Anghel Iordanescu admits that some of his team are getting long in the tooth, but he says they have the quality to come back and surprise younger teams.

"Romania must rise anew from its own ashes so that the golden generation do not miss their last chance of glory in England," he said, referring to players like Gheorghe Hagi, Ilie Dumitrescu and Marius Lacatus.

But the team is under a shadow because of Iordanescu's row with Romanian soccer authorities over his allegations of widespread match-rigging at home.

Although he has withdrawn his resignation, his absence from a friendly match against Yugoslavia in April sapped morale, perhaps contributing to the 1-0 loss.

"It was not normal for the Romanians to be playing without Iordanescu present," said defender Ionut Lupescu, who plays for German club Bayer Leverkusen.

It was only the fifth defeat in 30 matches for Romania played under Iordanescu's leadership since he was named as national trainer in July 1993.

Players from domestic clubs are also worried at the impact of Iordanescu's anti-rigging campaign which confronts many of the most powerful figures in the big Romanian clubs.

Iordanescu, himself a general in the Romanian army, has accused the heads of the big state clubs of "becoming rich on the back of the footballers' efforts on the pitch."

The Romanian soccer federation has agreed to investigate Iordanescu's claims that the domestic championship is being rigged.

Suns fall in 1st round to Spurs

PHOENIX (R) — David Robinson scored 30 points and pulled down 13 rebounds to carry the San Antonio Spurs into the Western Conference semifinals with a convincing 116-98 series-clinching win over the Phoenix Suns on Friday.

Vinny Del Negro added 25 points and Avery Johnson chipped in with 15 points and 13 assists for the Spurs, who won the first-round series three games to one and await the winner of the Utah Jazz-Portland Trail Blazers series.

Robinson made 12-of-21 shots and helped his team dominate the boards as San Antonio out-rebounded the Suns 47-30. The Spurs also bit 57.3 per cent of their shots and were 10-of-16 from three-point range.

"I thought the effort was fantastic," said Robinson.

"Last game we started strong and kind of eased off and tonight we maintained that intensity. I saw great focus coming in tonight. Everybody was ready to play," added San Antonio's all-star centre.

Charles Barkley, who led Phoenix to the NBA finals in 1992, paced his team with 21 points as the Suns were eliminated in the first round for the first time since 1991.

"It's no fun to lose the first round, it's no fun to play a .500 season," said Barkley. "It's going to be a long summer for our organisation. We're not used to this."

San Antonio used sports of 13-3 and 18-8 in the third quarter to break open a tight game and outscored the Suns 64-47 in the second half to win for the first time in seven playoff games in Phoenix.

Chris Carr had 17 points for Phoenix and Kevin Johnson added 16 in the losing effort.

The Suns drew within 67-61 with 6:01 left in the third quarter but San Antonio closed the period with its 18-8 run as Del Negro hit a pair of three-pointers to key the sport.

The Suns made just 7-of-20 shots in the third quarter and Barkley was held to just one point in the period.

"Our defence was great," said Spurs coach Bob Hill.

Johnson under unique pressure in countdown to Atlanta

LONDON (R) — Only one man on the planet can fully appreciate the pressure on Michael Johnson this year as he prepares for a unique double at the Atlanta Olympics.

Twelve years ago at the Los Angeles Olympics, Carl Lewis emulated fellow-American Jesse Owens by winning gold medals in the 100 and 200 metres, long jump and 4x100 metres relay.

Amazingly Lewis is still competing and hoping to qualify for the U.S. team for Atlanta but the spotlight this year will be on Johnson, who managed to get the Olympic track programme radically revised to accommodate his ambition of a unique 200-400 metres double.

Gold medals in both events plus another in the 4x400 metres relay would elevate Johnson to the same pantheon as Lewis and Owens and help to ensure the success of the third Olympics to be staged in the United States.

The 28-year-old Texan starts his international season at the Rio de Janeiro meeting, the opening event of the

1996 Grand Prix circuit and one of four meetings on his schedule before the Olympic trials in June.

"Michael's situation is similar to what I went through in 1984," Lewis said. "You have to win or you are not successful and I think that is unfair for anybody to have to deal with."

"The Olympic games bring together the best in the world and it's going to be difficult dealing with the expectations, dealing with the press, the training and travelling. And the schedule will be very tough."

Johnson, who spend 18 months trying to get the Olympic programme changed, can now concentrate on preparing for Atlanta.

"It definitely adds a tremendous amount of pressure going into the games. People are going to say an entire Olympics schedule was changed for you," he said.

"But I like that situation. I like being under pressure situations because I think I perform a lot better when I'm under pressure."

"Having gone through an Olympics before and having gone through a few world championships, you would think I would have a little more sense of what it is going to be like."

"But this is an Olympics in the States. I was a kid in 1984 when we had the last Olympics in the States, so I don't think it is something that I could even imagine."

The decision by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) to restructure the Olympic programme to suit both Johnson and Lewis is not entirely altruistic.

IAAF chief Primo Nebiolo and the Atlanta organisers are determined that the athletics programme should be a success, and that in turn means trying to provide American champions.

"I feel a responsibility to do whatever I can to try and make the sport as big here as it is in Europe," Johnson said.

Lewis added: "I think it's great that Michael gets the attention, or any track athlete gets the attention."

Schumacher takes pole position for fifth championship race

IMOLA, Italy (AP) — World champion Michael Schumacher set a lap record as he earned himself and home team Ferrari the first pole position of the season in Saturday's qualifying for the San Marino Grand Prix.

The German driver produced his "wonder lap" at the Imola circuit with three minutes left in the one-hour session, beating the so-far dominant drivers of the Williams Renault team.

Schumacher, who signed the richest contract in F-1 history to join Ferrari this year and bolster the sagging fortunes of the Italian team, turned the 4.89-kilometre lap

in one minute, 26.890 seconds, improving by 0.38 seconds his own record set at the wheel of a Benetton Renault in last year's qualifying.

The average speed of the world champion, who led 21 other drivers also in Friday's practice, was 202.683 kph.

Championship leader Damon Hill finished 0.21 seconds behind Schumacher and 0.12 ahead of his Williams Renault teammate Jacques Villeneuve, who came third.

Britain's David Coulthard was fourth in a McLaren Mercedes, 0.79 seconds behind Schumacher.

Frenchman Jean Alesi was

fifth quickest in his Benetton Renault, ahead the second Ferrari of Britain's Eddie Irvine.

Hill, who won three Grands Prix out of four this year, failed to beat Schumacher's time and restore Williams supremacy in the dying qualifying seconds.

The British driver will start in front row, along with Schumacher, in Sunday's race, the fifth event of the 1996 world F-1 championship.

Villeneuve, who ended Hill's winning streak by taking last Sunday's European Grand Prix at Nurburgring, will start from the second row, along with Coulthard.

<p>TODAY AT</p> <p>PHILADELPHIA</p> <p>1) James Bond 007...in Golden Eye Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45</p> <p>2) Nutcracker Prince Show: 11:00 a.m.</p>	<p>PIZZA</p> <p>*ESCAPE TO THE TOP (Arabic) Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30</p> <p>* Toy Story Shows: 12:30, 2, 3:30, 5</p>	<p>CONCORD</p> <p>CONCORD "1" * UNDER SIEGE "2" Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30</p> <p>* Ace Ventura "2" Shows: 2, 5:15</p> <p>CONCORD "2" HEATE Shows: 3:15, 6:15, 9:15</p>	<p>Antonio Banderas & Salma Hayek in Desperado Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30</p>	<p>PRESENTS THE SATIRICAL COMEDY Arab Human Rights at 8:30 p.m. For reservation please call 625155 - 640155</p>
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Israeli soldiers block Palestinian and Israeli labour activists from reaching the Al Ram checkpoint between the West Bank and Jerusalem during a protest against the nine-week-old Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Reuters photo)

All Hamas militants except Deif in jail, bomb plots uncovered - PNA

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police have arrested all members of the armed wing of Hamas except for its leader Mohammed Deif, the group's chief and Israel's most wanted man, the Palestinian security chief said Saturday.

"We have detained all the members of the Izzeddine Al Qassam armed group except for its leader Mohammed Deif, whom we are still hunting for," Colonel Mohammed Dahlan, head of Palestinian preventive security in Gaza, told AFP.

"We want to capture him," he said.

Col. Dahlan also said Palestinian police had virtually dismantled a secret Organisation drawn from Izzeddine Al Qassam members to carry out car bombings in Gaza and attack the Palestinian National

Authority (PNA).

"We have arrested almost all the members of the secret Hamas cells in Gaza, including the main coordinator between the cells and Izzeddine Al Qassam," he said, identifying the man as Ibrahim Al Maqadmah, a doctor at the Islamic University here.

Israeli authorities consider Mr. Deif the mastermind behind the series of suicide bombings in Israel by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the smaller Islamic Jihad in February and March.

Mr. Deif topped a list of more than a dozen militants wanted by Israel and submitted to the PNA. Palestinian police had already announced the arrest of most of the others on the list, including Mr. Deif's deputy, Adnan Al Ghoul.

Col. Dahlan, speaking Friday on Palestinian Television, asserted that Palestinian police had new proof that foreign-based leaders of Hamas had ordered car bombings in Gaza City and the assassination of top PNA figures.

"Palestinian security police have found a dangerous letter sent by Hamas leaders in Amman and Damascus ordering the assassination of five high-ranking PNA officials," Col. Dahlan said. He refused to identify the five names on the list.

Mr. Dahlan said the assassination campaign also targeted a list of "second-level" PNA officials and was ordered "to spark a civil war in Palestinian territories and prove the authority has failed" in its self-rule task.

Col. Dahlan said his services had also found written plans and maps for a Hamas car bombing campaign targeting the Gaza City office of President Yasser Arafat, the Saraya building which houses the authority's military intelligence and security services, and the main police headquarters.

"They planned to carry out the car bombings when there were only soldiers but no civilians around in order to cause fear in the Palestinian territories," he said.

Col. Dahlan showed a map of Mr. Arafat's office in Gaza City, which, he said, was drawn up by a secret Hamas cell charged with carrying out the car bombings.

Mr. Arafat and other officials in his autonomy government have repeatedly accused foreign-based elements

Pressure strong for arrest of Karadzic, Mladi

SARAJEVO (R) — Pressure is mounting for someone — anyone — to save the faltering Bosnian peace process by arresting indicted war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladić but no one wants the job, diplomats said on Saturday.

Mr. Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb president, and his army commander Mladić, still run 49 per cent of Bosnia as an ethnic separatist state, contrary to the Dayton peace agreement which ended 43 months of war here late last year. Dayton is supposed to lead to a reintegrated Bosnia.

"There is a narrow window — six weeks to two months at most — within which Karadzic and Mladić have to be removed or the entire Dayton peace process could come unglued," said a Western diplomat in Sarajevo who asked not to be named.

"Everyone agrees their continued presence is incompatible with free and fair elections (due by November) and the decision on whether to go forward with elections has to be made sometime in June. But nobody wants the job getting rid of them."

Dayton called for signatories to the agreement to deliver indicted war criminals to the U.N. tribunal.

The Bosnian government has arrested two Muslims who have been indicted. One Bosnian Croat living in Croatia surrendered voluntarily.

But the Bosnian Serb republic, headed by Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladić, refuses to recognise the jurisdiction of the court.

In neighbouring Serbia, President Slobodan Milosevic won a respite from international sanctions on the strength of his commitment to help implement Dayton's war crimes provisions but now has cold feet over arresting Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladić.

The NATO peace force in Bosnia, which has been criticised for not snatching war criminals, says it will detain Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladić only if they are encountered during routine duties. A commando-style raid has been ruled out.

So, while the international community has about 60,000 troops on the ground in and around Bosnia and billions of dollars in aid pledged to rebuild the country, it has no mechanism to deal with the greatest threat to success here.

"A wall of nationalist propaganda and procrastination is threatening to subvert Dayton's goals," former U.S. Senate majority leader George Mitchell said in Sarajevo on Saturday.

"The key to the success of the Dayton agreement depends on the removal of what is a relatively small number of individuals who have been indicted on charges of serious war crimes. Their continued presence ... remains the single most important obstacle to progress."

Mr. Mitchell is chairman of the Dayton Implementation Group (ICG), a potent collection of business, political and media leaders from around the globe whose aim is to prevent world crises through early intervention.

In Bosnia, ICG's task is to monitor and comment upon the progress of the Dayton peace accord.

Mr. Mitchell voiced publicly what most Sarajevo diplomats and many NATO officers have been saying privately for weeks: That Dayton's goal of a multi-ethnic Bosnia is slipping away because Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladić have not been nabbed.

The evidence is substantial. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Croats "cleansed" from the Serb republic by force during the war are being barred by the Karadzic-Mladić administration from returning to their homes, even for visits.

Muslim and Croat nationalists in Bosnia engage in the same sort of obstruction, although on a lesser, local scale.

As a result, the internal boundary line between Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation and its Serb republic is beginning to function more like an international border than an administrative demarcation.

Saudi cleric assails Israel, peace process

RIYADH (AFP) — A senior Saudi cleric launched a stinging attack on Israel and the Middle East peace process, accusing the Jewish state of "sowing the seeds of hate" during its offensive in Lebanon, the Saudi press reported Saturday.

The imam of Mecca, Sheikh Saleh Ben Hamed, said in Friday prayers at the Grand Mosque in Islam's holiest city that violence such as the attack on Lebanon would "unleash reserves of hate which are not limited to a single organisation or party" but which are felt "by every Arab and Muslim."

The sermon, one of the most violently anti-Israeli preached in Saudi Arabia since the start of the peace process, was heard by more than one million Muslims finishing the annual pilgrimage in Mecca and was published on the front page of Saudi newspapers.

"Operation Grapes of Wrath sowed the seeds of hate and vengeance, and lessened confidence in the international community," said

the imam, criticising "the major powers who defended this aggression and denied the defenders of a just cause the right to resistance."

"It is the right of all the oppressed to defend themselves if they have no other means of recovering their rights, and they should not be blamed (for resorting to violence) if the mediator with their enemy is not fair," he added, in apparent reference to the United States.

More than 200 people died in South Lebanon during Israel's 16-day offensive against Lebanon before a ceasefire came into force on April 27 after mediation by the United States and France.

Sheikh Hamed asked why "the peace and security of only one party and one people is taken into consideration" in the current peace process.

"What kind of peace foresees the military superiority of one party over another? What kind of peace leaves

(Continued on page 7)

Kabul jets raid Taliban amid talks on coalition

KABUL (AP) — Despite rekindled hopes for peace talks in Afghanistan, government jets on Saturday pounded rebel positions south of Kabul during a series of air strikes.

Three SU-22 fighter jets dropped at least five bombs on rebel Taliban territory near the besieged capital, Kabul, said a defence ministry spokesman.

The fighting comes as an alliance of warring Afghan factions consider a plan to form a coalition government with President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

"Our leaders are going to meet and discuss the possibility of a tie-up with the Rabbani group," said alliance spokesman Dr. Talib, who like many Afghans, uses only one name.

The alliance, or the Supreme Coordination Council of Afghanistan, hopes to include the government's chief rival Taliban militia.

Taliban leaders, however, have refused to the religious students, have vowed to topple Mr. Rabbani's government in Kabul and install strict Islamic rule throughout Afghanistan.

On Friday, several of Afghanistan's opposition factions met in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to examine a proposed treaty between Mr. Rabbani's government and some of his rivals.

Afghanistan has been wracked by factional fighting since 1992 when once-allied guerrillas splintered and turned their guns on each other after ousting Kabul's communist government.

After almost four years of fighting, the alliance is ready for peace, Dr. Talib said.

The leader of the Hezbe-Islami faction, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, said Mr. Rabbani indicated willingness to share power in an interim government.

Paradise Road

portrays interloster women's heroism

SINGAPORE (R) —

Paradise Road, a film about a group of women who survived internment in a Japanese prison camp by forming an unusual choir, is "a story that needs to be told," says actress Glenn Close.

"What is extraordinary about it is that the women involved were ordinary people asking themselves 'what am I doing here. How can this happen to me' — and what happens to the individual soul when faced with trauma and hardship," Close said at a news conference Saturday.

Written and directed by award-winning Australian director Bruce Beresford, the \$20 million Singapore-Australian production is scheduled to make its world premiere in Singapore at the end of the year, executive producer Greg Coote said.

The film is based on events surrounding a group of Australian and European women interned on the Indonesian island of Sumatra during the early years of World War II.

Many were fleeing the Japanese advance on Singapore when their ships were sunk. To survive the ordeal of internment, they formed a "vocal orchestra" which performed classical works such as Ravel's "Bolero".

The scores of their performances survived the war and the music is being recreated for the film. In addition to Close, the cast includes Jean Simmons, Cate Blanchett, Jennifer Ehle, Elizabeth Spriggs and Juliana Margulies.

Munich gets 1st fashion boutique for cops

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — The first fashion boutique specially aimed at officers of the law searching for that special look has been opened in Munich by a policeman. For those who wish to exchange the usual olive-green of the modern German cop with something more "cool" but appropriate to their function after hours, Cops and Co. Suedelne Fashion may have something to offer.

Commissioner Thomas Feulner, 32, says the latest thing are "shooting jeans" — a pair short full of holes due to being used for firearms target practice. Customers can take the empty cartridge cases home too, he said. Mr. Feulner's boutique is selling leather jackets — available to police officers only — bearing Cops and Co. labels which can be quickly flipped to display the wearer's genuine police insignia in case of sudden service. It also offers rare, obsolete police uniforms, batons, belts and handcuffs. "We've already sold a pair of handcuffs to a married couple and batons for self-defence courses," Mr. Feulner said.

China unleashes children's army on smokers

BEIJING (AFP) — China has unleashed a half-million-strong children's army of "peaceful persuaders" to heckle the country's smokers into kicking the habit, Xinhua reported. The youngsters have formed a mini-army of peaceful persuaders in a nationwide drive to curb the increase in the country's smoker population, which already stands at 350 million, or 29 per cent of China's 1.2 billion people, the official news agency said. The children are to take part in a year-long publicity campaign, during which they are to persuade family members to quit smoking and to "stop people who puff cigarettes in public places with 'no-smoking' signs," Xinhua said.

Iran: U.S. firms main losers from embargo

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran said Saturday that Washington's year-old trade embargo has mainly hurt U.S. companies by locking them out of a strategic oil-rich market.

State-run Tehran Radio said that far from achieving its goal of squeezing the Iranian economy and forcing Tehran into submitting to Washington's will, the sanctions have strengthened Iran's resources and resolve.

"Optimists in the White House had predicted that since U.S. companies were the buyers of more than 25 per cent of Iran's oil, and because some U.S.-affiliated international oil companies had invested in Iran's oil industry, the embargo would inflict an irreparable blow on Iran," the radio said in a commentary.

In March last year an executive order by President Bill Clinton killed a \$1 billion development project between U.S. oil giant Conoco and Iran.

In June, Mr. Clinton tightened existing sanctions that prohibited trade and U.S. investment in Iran, seeking to force Tehran to abandon its alleged quest for nuclear weapons and its alleged sponsorship of international terrorism. Iran denies it is involved in either activity.

Ever since, U.S. companies have been banned from buying Iranian oil even through foreign subsidiaries. Before the ban, U.S. companies were purchasing Iranian oil worth some \$3.5 billion a year, according to the Clinton administration.

Another U.S. company, forced to pull out of Iran was soft drinks giant Coca-Cola.

Tehran Radio said that Iran easily found new markets for its oil, selling to some 50 countries.

Being deprived of U.S. expertise, it had been forced to develop its own skills, the radio said.

"Many projects, especially in oil and gas, were taken over by Iranian experts, saving millions of dollars of the nation's money," the commentary said.

Family members 'banned' from visiting Qatar ex-emir

DUBAI (AFP) — Qatari authorities have barred several members of the ruling family from visiting the ousted emir living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), sources close to the former ruler said Saturday.

A delegation of seven members, headed by Sheikh Saud Ben Fahd Al Thani, tried to fly to the UAE last week to extend greetings to the ousted emir, Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani on the feast of Al Adha.

But they were not allowed to leave Doha, and the authorities seized Sheikh Saud's passport and disconnected telephone lines from his house, the sources said.

The incident followed the arrest of another royal family member, Sheikh Fahd Ben Ghanem Ben Abdul Rahman, because he visited the UAE. His family has fled to a neighbouring Gulf Arab state

but has threatened action, the sources said.

"The security measures taken by Qatari authorities against some members of the ruling family are designed to intimidate the supporters of the father emir within the ruling family," one source said.

The UAE has granted refuge to Sheikh Khalifa, who was overthrown in a bloodless palace coup by his son, Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, in June.

Sheikh Hamad accused his father of masterminding a failed counter-coup attempt in February, a charge denied by Sheikh Khalifa.

The former emir has vowed to regain his reign of Qatar, a tiny Gulf state which has the fourth largest gas reserves in the world and one of the highest per capita incomes.

Aqaba Region Authority A Unique Investment Opportunity

in the city of Aqaba

The Aqaba Region Authority announces a unique investment opportunity to develop the Grand Arab Revolution Square and its seafront.

The Square is located in the "Middle Beach" zone of the city of Aqaba next to Ash Sharif Al Husayn Ibn Ali Home and the Aqaba Castle.

The total area of the Square is approximately 20,000 square metres consisting of the following:

- Main public area, approximately 13,000 m²
- Children playing ground, approximately 4,000 m²
- Covered walkways, approximately 1,500 m²
- Theatre, approximately 1,250 m²

The investor is required to provide the following facilities on the beach front:

- * Boat marina
- And/OR
- * Other water facilities such as Aquariums, Underwater restaurants, or a Water sports complex.

Other optional facilities may include the following:

- a. Floating Hotel
- b. Floating Restaurant
- c. Glass Boat Rental
- d. Restaurants within the Square
- e. Retail for Traditional Crafts
- f. Any other facilities suggested by the investor.

Interested investors are invited to contact the Aqaba Region Authority — The Investment Unit — during working hours before Saturday 11/5/1996 to obtain description of, and conditions for this unique investment opportunity.



Prof. Dr. Fayez Khasawneh
President
Aqaba Region Authority